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Karma here and now in a Mūlasarvāstivāda *avadāna*: How the Bodhisattva changed sex and was born as a female 500 times*

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This article presents an *avadāna* excerpt found in Śamathadeva's *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*. The tale reports a monk's change of sex to female, followed by five hundred successive births as a woman, all of which happened as the karmic result of having addressed his fellow monks as women. The *avadāna* identifies this monk, who is introduced as a reciter of the Tripiṭaka, with the Bodhisattva in a past life. The story of the past serves to explain why the Buddha's advice was disregarded by the quarrelling monks of Kauśāmbī, who were involved in a dispute over a minor issue of monastic discipline. The present study locates this unsourced *avadāna* in its broader textual context, suggesting the possibility of its placement in a no longer extant Mūlasarvāstivāda *Ḳsudraka-piṭaka*. It then explores the question of a 'gendered evaluation' of karmic retribution, as well as the significance of a change of sex to female (and eventually back to male). This change reportedly took place when the Bodhisattva was already on the path to Buddhahood and had generated the *bodhicitta*, his resolve to reach full awakening.

The *avadāna* quotation in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā* (Up 4069)

Śamathadeva's *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā* is a sourcebook for the canonical quotations in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. The text is extant in a Tibetan translation included in the Tanjur, stemming from a tradition of Mūlasarvāstivāda affiliation.

The *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā* contains altogether five quotations of or references to *avadānas*.¹ The quotation under study in the present article (numbered Up 4069)² expands on the story, briefly mentioned in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*'s chapter on the elucidation of karma, of a monk who suffers a sex change for having insulted his fellow *saṅgha* members. The monk had made himself guilty of *saṅghastrivādasamudācāra*, that is, the behaviour of calling other monks women, which he had done out of anger. The episode serves as an example of the workings of presently effective karma or karma to be experienced here and now (*dṛṣṭadharmavedanīyakarma*). The relevant discussion in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* reads:

[Question:] Then, what kind of action should be understood as to be experienced here and now?

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¹ For an overview of this work and its significance for the study of the early Buddhist discourses, including a survey of previous literature, see Dhammadinnā 2012 and the introduction in Honjō 2014 (in Japanese). For a brief summary of the other *avadāna*-related quotations and a translation and study of one of these see Dhammadinnā 2016b.

² According to the convention adopted in Honjō 1984, the abbreviation Up stands for *Upāyikā* – as in *Abhidharmakośa-upāyikā-ṭīkā* – and the number 4069 for canonical quotation no. 69 in the fourth chapter of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* and the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*.

[Answer:] An action [that brings] a fruit here and now by virtue of the distinctive nature of its field and its proclivity.

An action [of the type whose fruit is] to be experienced here and now occurs either by virtue of the distinctive nature of its field – for example, it is just as what has been heard about a transformation of [sexual] attributes due to the behaviour of calling those in the [monks'] community women³ – or else by virtue of the distinctive nature of its proclivity – just as, for example, there is [the obtaining of] virility for a eunuch from desiring to free bulls from castration (lit. 'emasculatation').⁴

In the *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā* Yaśomitra elaborates on *saṅghastrīvādasamudācāra* by reporting that a monk, just defeated in a legal procedure, had insulted the *saṅgha* saying: “You are all women” (*striyo yūyam*). Thus for this monk the presently effective karma had led to the disappearance of the male (sexual) characteristic and the manifestation of the female (sexual) characteristic, this being, more specifically, a case of presently effective karma by virtue of the distinctive quality of the karmic field represented by the Buddhist *saṅgha*, which had been the target of his insult. That is, the high ‘karmic ranking’ of the Buddhist monastic community was the determining factor for the immediate ripening of the bad karma.⁵

Śamathadeva provides additional details on the incident of the monk’s *saṅghastrīvādasamudācāra* by presenting the event as a past life remembered by the Buddha, who relates this *avadāna* to his monks. Here I translate his citation from the *bhāṣya*, followed by the narrative.

3. The Sanskrit text does not explicitly indicate that a monk is responsible for the behaviour in question, a detail evident in the Tibetan translation of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, *dge slong zhig gis* in D 4090, *mngon pa, ku*, 195a₇ and P 5591, *mngon pa'i bstan bcos, gu*, 226b₃, and in the two Chinese versions, 有一比丘 in T 1559 at T XXIX 238c₆ and 聞有苾芻 in T 1558 at T XXIX 82b₁₆. This statement is also taken up in two *Abhidharma* commentaries by Saṅghabhadra, T 1562 at T XXIX 571c₉₋₁₀ and T 1563 at T XXIX 876b₂₅₋₂₆. The string *thab mo brgal ba* in the Tibetan counterpart to *saṅghastrīvādasamudācāra*, *dge 'dun la bud med do zhes thab mo brgal ba* in D 4090, *mngon pa, ku*, 195a₇ and P 5591, *mngon pa'i bstan bcos, gu*, 226b₃, is lexically unclear; cf. also Hirakawa 1978: III 28. It could contain an old verbal form not otherwise attested in lexicography or else a scribal oversight for a form similar to *thab mo 'gyed pa* ‘to quarrel’, in which case the Tibetan version would read “Just as, for example, when the sexual characteristics of a monk changed because during a quarrel [he called] those in the community [of monks] women”, *dper na dge slong gzhig gis dge 'dun la bud med do zhes > thab mo 'gyed pa < las mtshan gyur to zhes grags pa lta bu'o*.

4. *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* on *Abhidharmakośa* IV.56, Pradhan 1967: 232, 5-9: *atha dṛṣṭadharmavedanīyaṃ kar-ma kīdṛṣaṃ veditavyam? dṛṣṭadharmaphalaṃ karma kṣetrāśayaviśeṣataḥ. dṛṣṭadharmavedanīyaṃ karma kṣetraviśeṣād vā bhavati. yathā saṅghastrīvādasamudācārād vyañjanaparivṛttiḥ śrūyate. āśayaviśeṣād vā: yathā śaṇḍhasya gavām apuṃstvapratiṃmokṣaṇāt pumbhāvaḥ*; Tibetan translation in D 4090, *mngon pa, ku*, 195a₆, b₁ and P 5591, *mngon pa'i bstan bcos, gu*, 226b₁₋₃; Chinese translations in T 1559 (Paramārtha) at T XXIX 238c₄₋₉ and T 1558 (玄奘) at T XXIX 82b₁₂₋₂₀ (translated in de La Vallée Poussin 1980 [1924]: III 121). See also the commentarial explanation in Yaśomitra’s *Sphuṭārthā Abhidharmakośavyākhyā*, Wogihara 1971b: 394, 9-16.

5. Wogihara 1971b: 394, 9-12: *saṅghastrīvādasamudācārād iti: bhikṣuṇā kila kenacid vyavahāraparājitenā saṅghaḥ striyo yūyam iti samudācaritaḥ tasya dṛṣṭa eva dharme puruṣavyaṇjanam antarhitam strīvyāñjanam ca prādurbhūtam iti. tad idaṃ kṣetraviśeṣād dṛṣṭadharmavedanīyaṃ bhavati*; see D 4092, *mngon po, ngu*, 46b₂₋₄ and P 5593, *mngon pa'i bstan bcos, chu*, 52a₃₋₅. Alongside its ethical and karmic consequences, insulting speech, (*ūnamanuṣyavāda*) constitutes also an offence against the monastic code, rule *pāyantika* no. 2 in the Sarvāstivāda and Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinayas* for monks.

Translation of Up 4069⁶

“Just as, for instance, when addressing the community of monks as ‘women’.”⁷

On the occasion when the words of the Fortunate One were dismissed by the monks of Kauśāmbī for three times, [other] monks enquired of the Buddha, the Fortunate One, the one who eliminates all doubts: “Because of what kind of action performed by the Tathāgata, due to the ripening of what action, has the Fortunate One’s wholesome speech, beneficial speech, counsel fit to be accepted, been rejected for three times by the monks of Kauśāmbī?”

The Fortunate One explained: “Monks, [the result of the accumulation of deeds is to be received by the Tathāgata himself, the conditions have ripened – persisting almost like a flood – and surely have to be experienced. Who else would experience the deeds that were earlier performed and accumulated? Monks, the deeds that are performed and accumulated do not ripen in the exterior earth element, water element, fire element and wind element. On the contrary, the deeds that are performed and accumulated, be they good or bad, ripen in the aggregates, the elements and the sense bases that are appropriated.

Not even in hundreds of millions of aeons

Do deeds dwindle away.

When their accumulation has been reached and the time has come,]

Their fruit matures for embodied beings.⁸

Monks, in the bygone past, a Tathāgata, an arhat, a Rightly Fully Awakened One, accomplished in knowledge and conduct, a Well Gone One, a knower of the world, an unsurpassed leader of those to be disciplined, a teacher of gods and humans, a Buddha, a Fortunate One, a Rightly Fully Awakened One by the name of Ajita had appeared in the world.

At that time I was engaged in the practice of a bodhisattva, being the son of a wealthy man. When the intention for unsurpassed awakening arose, I went forth. Having

⁶ For full references to the Tibetan text see the collation given as an appendix to this article; cf. also Honjō 1984: 64–65. For a Japanese translation see Honjō 2014: II 583–584.

⁷ *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* Pradhan 1967: 232,^{7–8} on *Abhidharmakośa* IV.56: *yathā saṅghastrīvādasamudācārād vyañjanaparivṛttiḥ śrūyate*; see D 4090, *mngon pa, ku*, 195a₇ and P 5591, *mngon pa'i bstan bcos, gu*, 226b₃; T 1559 at T XXIX 238c_{6–7} and T 1558 at T XXIX 82b_{16–18} (translation in de La Vallée Poussin 1980 [1924]: III 121).

⁸ The text of Up 4069 reads: *bcom ldan 'das kyis bka' stsal pa dge slong dag de bzhin gshegs pa nyid kyis te sngon gzhan gyis byas shing bsags pa dag gzhan su* (G: *sum*) *zhig gis nyams su myong bar 'gyur ba zhes bya ba nas lus can rnam la 'bras bur smin zhes bya ba'i bar du'o*. As signaled by the formula “from ... up to ...” (*nas ... bar du*), this is an abbreviated version of a module common in Mūlasarvāstivāda narratives (the module does not occur elsewhere in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*). The integration supplied in the translation within square brackets is based on an occurrence of the same module for instance in the *Avadānaśataka* XVI, Speyer 1902–1906: I 91,^{5–12} (= D 343, *mdo sde, am*, 48b_{1–4} and P 1012, *mdo sna tshogs, mdo, u*, 50b₅–51a₁), which appears to be the nearest Mūlasarvāstivāda parallel to Up 4069 in terms of closeness of wording; see also *Dīvyāvadāna* II, Cowell and Neil 1886: 54,^{1–10}. For an exhaustive list of the occurrence of the formula see Hiraoka 2002: 167–168. There are several parallel fixed formulas in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā* and the *Avadānaśataka*, pointing to proximity of transmission within the Mūlasarvāstivāda textual tradition; see also the next passage in the *avadāna* quotation which continues to parallel the *Avadānaśataka*. In fact, one of the *avadāna* quotations in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*, Up 2055, is cited and referenced directly from the *Avadānaśataka* (XCVIII); for more details see Dhammādinā 2016b, and for a survey of the literature and discussion on the Mūlasarvāstivāda affiliation of the Sanskrit and Tibetan *Avadānaśataka(s)*, see Dhammādinā 2015: 491 with note 22. Other occurrences of the module are, e.g., in the *Kṣudraka-vastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, D 6, *'dul ba, tha*, 113b₅–114a₁ and P 1035, *'dul ba, de*, 109a_{2–6} (translated in Dhammādinā 2016a: 28; the module is abbreviated and marked accordingly in the Chinese parallel, T 1451 at T XXIV 249a_{25–27}, translated in Dhammādinā 2016a: 32), and in the *Saṅghabhedā-vastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, Gnoli 1978: II 1,^{11–2,4} (= D 1, *'dul ba, nga*, 109b₇–110a₄ and P 1030, *'dul ba, ce*, 105a_{2–6}).

gone forth, I became versed in the Tripiṭaka.⁹ Afterwards, there occurred a litigation in the community of monks. I caused the litigation to increase more and more.¹⁰ Eventually, I was expelled by a monk reciter of the *sūtras*,¹¹ and the litigation was settled. I addressed the community of monks [saying:] ‘Is this not women’s way of settling a quarrel?’. On account of that deed of abusive speech my male faculty vanished and the female faculty appeared.

For five hundred births I continued to be born as a woman until femaleness was reversed through the power of the Rightly Fully Awakened One Ratnaśikhin and I regained maleness.¹²

At that time, on that occasion, when I was the son of a wealthy man and practicing as a bodhisattva, in spite of having become versed in the Tripiṭaka, I spoke abusively to the monastic community. On account of that deed, [now] the monks of Kauśāmbī dismissed my words for three times.”

The same is versified in a story in the **Bahubuddha-avadāna* of the **Kṣudraka*:

“Afterwards [in the dispensation] of the Buddha Ajita

I became versed in the Tripiṭaka.

When [there was] a litigation in the community of monks

I called the [male] monastic community women.

By performing a deed of abusive speech,

I got into the condition of being a woman.

And, once again, by virtue of a faithful mind,

[Later] I changed back into the male state.”

A Mūlasarvāstivāda *Kṣudraka*: tracing the source of the *avadāna*

At the conclusion of the quoted excerpt, Śamathadeva states that the same subject is found in verse in a story located in the *sangs rgyas mang po’i rtogs pa brjod pa*, a **Bahubuddha-avadāna* (?) of the *Kṣudraka* (*phran tshegs*).¹³ The term *rtogs pa brjod pa*, which I have rendered above as ‘story’, literally means the ‘presentation’ or ‘account’ of ‘(spiritual) realisations’, that is, an account of the heroic actions of its protagonist(s); normally it denotes an *avadāna* but it may also refer to a *jātaka*.¹⁴ This reference could be to a passage located in a *Kṣudraka-piṭaka* or *Kṣudraka-āgama* transmitted by Mūlasarvāstivāda reciters or else in the *Kṣudraka* section of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* in the recension to which Śamathadeva had access. Both options would be in theory possible in view of the natural placement of such an *avadāna* within a *Vinaya* narrative or in a *Kṣudraka* scriptural collection that would be open

⁹ *Mahāvīyutpatti* no. 1411 in Sakaki 1916: 109 and no. 1415 in Ishihama and Fukuda 1989: 75 has *tripiṭakam* for *sde snod gsum*, thus *sde snod gsum pa* should represent *traipiṭaka*.

¹⁰ Honjō 2014: I 584 renders this passage as かれのために、その諍論がますます拡大した, “By him, the litigation increased more and more”, i.e., “a litigation that greatly increased because of me”, understanding *des* as a demonstrative pronoun referring to “him” (かれのために), in the sense of the Buddha who is relating his own past-life story. I render *des* in *des rtsod pa de cher ’phel bar byas so* in the first person for better readability; in fact the Sanskrit text itself might have used the pronoun *tena* ‘by him’ as if the Buddha is referring to himself once upon a time, when he was “that monk”.

¹¹ *Mahāvīyutpatti* no. 5141 in Sakaki 1916: 339 and no. 5138 in Ishihama and Fukuda 1989: 249 gives *sūtra-dhara* for *mdo* (*sde*) *’dzin pa*.

¹² The text (all editions) has the instrumental/ergative mark *gyis* after the name of the Samyaksambuddha Ratnaśikhin, *yang dag par rdzogs pa’i sangs rgyas rin chen gtsug tor can gyis*.

¹³ On Tibetan titles representing *bahu°* or *°bahu* (*mang po*) in *bahudhātuka* or **dhātubahutaka* (including occurrences of *kham mang po pa’i mdo* in Up 1032, 2017, 3099 and 6039), cf. Skilling 1994: 772 and 774 and Anālayo 2011: II 645 notes 47–48.

¹⁴ *Mahāvīyutpatti* no. 1273 in Sakaki 1916: 97 and no. 1278 in Ishihama and Fukuda 1989: 68 gives *avadānam* for *rtogs pa brjod pa’i sde*.

to the inclusion of *avadāna*-type material. Considering Śamathadeva's concern with providing canonical sources, it is to be expected that – unless otherwise indicated – the *avadāna* should be located somewhere in a Tripiṭaka rather than a narrative collection not included in it. (Here I use the term 'canonical' as a shorthand for texts included in the Tripiṭaka collection Śamathadeva relied upon. In this I follow along the lines of the Buddhist tradition's own recognition of Tripiṭaka(s) as 'the canon' of the Buddha's Word recited and collected at the First Saṅgīti.)

The *avadāna* recorded by Śamathadeva explains the Buddha's present inability to settle the quarrel that had broken out among the monks of Kauśāmbī, who ignored the Buddha's admonition. Other known versions of the story of the Kauśāmbī quarrel are obvious options in an attempt to locate a possible parallel to the *avadāna* excerpt in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*, yet a comparable narrative is not found in any of them. Nevertheless, the story of the quarrel does involve, in some of its versions, another tale of a past life of the Buddha. Several *Vinaya* and discourse versions report how a crown prince forgave the cruel killing of his father by another king who had conquered their kingdom.¹⁵ This is the story of Prince 'Long Life' or 'Long Lived' (Dīghāyu or Dīghāvu in Pali, corresponding to Sanskrit Dīrghāyus). In most versions of the account of the Kauśāmbī quarrel this functions as a parable to instil an attitude of patience.¹⁶ In the Pali *Jātaka* collection and in a Chinese *jātaka* compilation it takes the form of a past life of the Buddha.¹⁷ These two versions, however, disagree on whom they identify with the Bodhisattva.¹⁸

Regardless of such variations, the presence of this *jātaka* in connection with the Kauśāmbī quarrel testifies to a tendency to associate past-life narratives to this event, which is similarly evident in the *avadāna* transmitted in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*. The case of the tale of Prince Long Life in some versions of the account of the Kauśāmbī quarrel illustrates a pattern where a parable meant for homiletic purposes becomes a past-life story of the Buddha. It remains open to question whether the same might explain the incident of addressing the community of monks as women cited by Śamathadeva as an *avadāna* connected to the Kauśāmbī quarrel.

Besides, the topic of the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*'s *avadāna* can be related to the theme of the Buddha's past bad karma and its effects to be felt in his last life, a theme especially prominent in literature of the Middle Period of Indian Buddhism, particularly evident within, but not limited to, the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition.¹⁹ Nevertheless, incidents involving

¹⁵ The tale is studied in detail by Anālayo 2010: 65–67, who suggests that it was probably not a *jātaka* from the outset.

¹⁶ MĀ 72 at T I 535b₁₄, EĀ 24.8 at T II 629a₁, T 212 at T IV 694c₁₈, Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya* in T 1428 at T XXII 882b₆, Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya* in T 1421 at T XXII 160a₅, Theravāda *Vinaya* at Vin I 349₅ (here and in the next footnote the references are to the conclusion of the tale, taken from Anālayo 2010: 65–67).

¹⁷ Jā 371 at Jā III 213₅ (translated in Francis and Neil 1897: III 39–140), Jā 428 at Jā III 490₁₀ (translated in Francis and Neil 1897: III 289–291) and T 152 at T III 6a₁₄ (cf. also T 161 at T III 387b₂₁) (the references are to the translation of the entire tales).

¹⁸ Cf. Dhammānā 2015–2016: 35.

¹⁹ To remain on topic of the Bodhisattva's bad karma, there would arise a (scholastic) question as to whether, in the present occasion, the Bodhisattva was speaking falsely, since he knew very well the monks were not women, and was at the very least trying to defame them. According to the Pali *Jātaka-aṭṭhakathā*, Jā 431 at Jā III 499₅₋₈: *bodhisattassa hi ekaccesu ṭhānesu pāṇātipāto pi adinnādānam pi kāmesumicchācāro pi surāmerayamajjapānam pi hoti* (E^c: *hosi*, but *hoti* recorded as a variant reading, p. 499 note 13) *yeva, atthabhedaka-visaṁvādanam purakkhatvā, musāvādo nāma na hoti*, "the Bodhisattva on certain occasions may kill, steal, engage in sexual misconduct and drink intoxicants; but he cannot, preferring to hurt the welfare [of others] by lying, speak falsely" (translation with modifications after Ānandajoti 2012: 7; cf. also Francis and Neil 1897: III 296).

an insult by addressing fellow monks as women leading to a change of sex are, as far as I know, unattested outside the Sarvāstivāda/Mūlasarvāstivāda textual context. This includes not only Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa* with its *bhāṣya* and the commentaries depending on them, including Yaśomitra's *Sputārthā Abhidharmakośavyākhyā*, Śamathadeva's *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā* and the two Abhidharma commentaries by Saṅghabhadra available in Chinese translation mentioned above, but also a wealth of other sources that I take into account in the following pages.

Now the *avadāna* quotation simply shows that the bad karma of the Bodhisattva was reversed in the course of the aeon when he was pursuing the bodhisattva under the Buddha Ratnaśikhin. The last verse of the stanza quoted by Śamathadeva at the end of the *avadāna* excerpt speaks of a mind imbued with confidence (presumably in the Buddha Ratnaśikhin), which in my translation above I rendered with 'faithful mind' (*sems rab dad pa yis*). This is what effected the regaining of maleness, thus marking the final purification of the unwholesome karma in question in the presence of the former Buddha Ratnaśikhin or through his medium.

This reference appears to be to the tale of a meeting of the Bodhisattva, who at that time appears as a woman, with a former Buddha, reported in a number of texts:²⁰ a discourse in the Chinese translation of the *Ekottarika-āgama*,²¹ a story included the 'Collection on the Six Perfections' (六度集經),²² and one of the chapters in the so-called 'Scripture on the Wise and the Fool', preserved in Chinese, Tibetan and Mongolian translation.²³ In another parallel version, the *Padīpadāna-jātaka* of the *Paññāsa-jātaka* collection transmitted in Burma,²⁴ the woman does not get to meet the Buddha in person but the story unfolds via the agency of a monk who functions as an intermediary. The woman is a princess in all versions except the 'Collection on the Six Perfections', where she is a destitute widow.

The Buddha of the past is named Ratnaśikhin in the 'Scripture on the Wise and the Fool',²⁵ and Porāṇa Dīpaṅkara in the *Padīpadāna-jātaka*,²⁶ whereas he is not mentioned by name in the 'Collection on the Six Perfections'. In the *Ekottarika-āgama* discourse the name of the Buddha is represented with the pair of characters 寶藏, the first of which is a standard Chinese rendering of *ratna*- 'jewel', and the second corresponds with the senses 'storage', 'container' etc. of Sanskrit *garbha*-, thus appearing to be a literal translation of Ratna-garbha.²⁷ A Buddha by this name is often listed alongside Dīpaṅkara to form a lineage of nine

20. For translations and a study of the various versions in addition to Anālayo 2015 and Dhammadinnā 2015 (with references to previous literature), see Konczak 2012 [2014]: 63–66 (§ 2.6.3), a contribution I was not aware of when I wrote my article published as Dhammadinnā 2015.

21. EĀ 43.2 at T II 757a₂₆–39a₇ (translated in Anālayo 2015: 106–113).

22. Story no. 73 in T 152 at T III 38c₄–39a₇ (translated in Chavannes 1910: I 263–266 and Shyu 2008: 180–183).

23. Story no. 20 in T 202 at T IV 370c₂₂–371c₂₅; story no. 37 in D 341, *mdo sde, a*, 265b₅–268b₁ and P 1008, *mdo sna tshogs, hu*, 270a₆–273a₃ (edited by Schmidt 1843: I 261, 3–266, 7 and Moritaka 1970: 487, and translated into German by Schmidt 1843: II 327–333 and Japanese by Moritaka 1970: 480–489); for the Mongolian version see the translation by Frye 1981: 196–199 and Dhammadinnā 2015: 492–493 note 24 (all references are to the entire tale).

24. Jaini 1981: 396, 1–402, 3.

25. T 202 at T IV 371b₂₃: 寶髻; D 341, *mdo sde, a*, 267b₂ and P 1008, *mdo sna tshogs, hu*, 272a₄: *rin chen gtsug*; Frye 1981: 197: "Jewel Tuft" (in all cases given as the name of the new-born prince who then became the Buddha). I would like to take the opportunity to correct an oversight in Dhammadinnā 2015/2016: 487, where I erroneously indicated that the "princess named Munī ... receives a prediction to Buddhahood by the former Buddha Dīpaṅkara". The Buddha who gives the prediction is obviously Ratnaśikhin, while the monk who offered the lamps featured in the tale is a past life of the Buddha Dīpaṅkara.

26. Jaini 1981: 397, 4.

27. EĀ 43.2 at T II 757a₂₈ult: 寶藏如來 and 757b₈ult: 寶藏佛.

(rather than the more common seven) Buddhas. In the *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka-sūtra*, for example, a bodhisattva named Samudrareṇu, who is to become the Buddha Śākyamuni in the future, makes a vow in front of the Buddha Ratnagarbha related to the duration of his *saddharma* after his Parinirvāṇa as a future Samyaksambuddha.²⁸ In fact the same pair of characters appears alongside Dīpaṅkara and the seven former Buddhas also in another discourse in the same *Ekottarika-āgama*, a collection known for the complex vicissitudes of its translation and its somewhat idiosyncratic renderings of Indic proper names.²⁹ This discourse includes several Mahāyāna elements and signs of later development, in fact it may contain material that is not original to the Indic *Ekottarika-āgama* collection on which the translation was ostensibly based.³⁰ Thus in principle the name 寶藏 in the *Ekottarika-āgama* story of the Buddha's past life as a princess could be either an idiosyncratic rendering pointing to Ratnaśikhin, as attested in the other versions,³¹ or else represent Ratnagarbha,³² whose presence in cosmological schemas was already common at the time of the Indic transmission as well as Chinese translation of the *Ekottarika-āgama*.³³

Whereas in the *Ekottarika-āgama* discourse, the 'Collection on the Six Perfections', the Chinese version of the 'Scripture on the Wise and the Fool' and the *Padīpadāna-jātaka* the woman receives a prediction that in future she will be given a prediction to Buddhahood, in the Tibetan and Mongolian 'Scripture on the Wise and the Fool' she receives an actual prediction to Buddhahood, as the future Buddha Śākyamuni.

The motif of sex change appears in the Chinese version of the 'Scripture on the Wise and the Fool', where the woman protagonist is transformed into a male as soon as she receives a prediction from the former Buddha. The motif also recurs in the 'Collection on the Six Perfections', where she changes to male after having been supernaturally rescued from her attempted suicide by the Buddha, who then gives the 'predicted prediction'³⁴ to Buddhahood to the woman who has now become a man. However, in the Tibetan and Mongolian 'Scripture on the Wise and the Fool' the woman does not undergo a change of sex. As a result, here a female receives the prediction to realise Buddhahood in the future.

In passing, the *Padīpadāna-jātaka* remarks that the woman's birth as female was the result of a previously performed unwholesome deed.³⁵ This karmic reading could simply voice a negative appraisal of female birth on the part of the compilers of the *Padīpadāna-jātaka* that is evident throughout this version of the story, and it is difficult to determine if it should be considered an indirect reference to a specific past life of the woman as a man who committed the unwholesome deed in question, that is, the past life as the monk who insulted

28. Sanskrit in Yamada 1968: II 262,9-11; Tibetan in D 112, *mdo sde, cha*, and P 780, *mdo sna tshogs, cu*, 269a₆₋₇; Chinese in T 158 at T III 270a₃₋₄ (an anonymous translation from the Jin 晉 period, AD 350–431) and T 157 at T III 211b₂₆₋₂₇ (Dharmakṣema, translated AD 414–421); see Nattier 1991: 84–85 and 49 with note 59 for a discussion and translation of this passage.

29. EĀ 26.9 at T II 641a₁₈, already noted by Yamada 1968: I 143 note 2.

30. The *Cunda-sutta*, SN 47.13 at SN V 161,18, a discourse that is to an extent a parallel, or, more accurately, the Pali counterpart of a textual antecedent on which the *Ekottarika-āgama* discourse seemingly expands, does not have a corresponding part.

31. So Anālayo 2015: 106 note 39 with reference to the present occurrence, following an indication in Akanuma 1929: 543 (though not referred to the name of a Buddha). On Ratnaśikhin's position see also, e.g., de La Vallée Poussin 1909: 739, Kloetzli 1983: 85, Chanwit Tudkeao 2012 and Tournier 2018.

32. Yamada 1968: I 142–143 opts for Ratnagarbha with reference to the present occurrence.

33. The text presently included in the Chinese Tripiṭaka, based on a text orally recited by Dharmanandin, is "for the most part ... the translation done by Zhú Fóniàn (竺佛念) in 384 C.E."; see Anālayo 2016b: 1 with references to earlier studies.

34. In the words of Derris 2008: 36.

35. Jaini 1981: 398,10; cf. also Anālayo 2015: 114 note 57.

the monastic community as told in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*.³⁶

The details in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā* version (name of the former Buddha encountered by the woman, called Ratnaśikhin; change of sex under the former Buddha) do not allow to pinpoint a single close parallel among the versions mentioned so far. This seems to an extent natural with narrative materials being subject to variation, fluidity in transmission and cross-contamination. Nevertheless, it can be safely concluded that the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā* implicitly cross-references to this story of the Buddha's past life as a woman who receives a prediction to Buddhahood under the former Buddha Ratnaśikhin and who thereby undergoes a change of sex upon receiving the prediction to Buddhahood.

Now according to the storyline of the *avadāna* quotation in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*, the Buddha-to-be's transformation into woman and his five hundred successive female births take place after the commencement of the path of a bodhisattva, in that they occur after the arising of the thought of awakening, the *bodhicitta*, at the time when a Buddha by the name of Ajita had appeared in the world. The situation is reversed when the Bodhisattva changes back to male in the aeon he was practicing during the dispensation of the Buddha Ratnaśikhin. This marks the end of the fruition of the negative karma committed by insulting the monks and at the same time brings the Bodhisattva one step closer to the gaining of his final birth and attainment of Buddhahood.

This turning point is also echoed by the great Prajñāpāramitā commentary generally known as **Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* (大智度論), which in its periodisation of the career of Buddhas into specific time blocks states that, at the time of the Buddha Ratnaśikhin, Śākyamuni became freed from rebirth as a female:³⁷

For the Buddha Śākyamuni, the first innumerable aeon goes from the former Buddha Śākyamuni to the Buddha Ratnaśikhin. From that time on, the Bodhisattva was freed from all female births.

With permanent liberation from female birth the first period in a three-aeon long spiritual career came to its conclusion. A similar timeline is echoed by the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*.³⁸

The events recounted in the *avadāna* quotation need to be positioned within the Buddhological map presupposed by the tradition underlying the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, bearing in mind that the existence of Buddhological debates even within the Sarvāstivāda and Mūlasarvāstivāda scholastic traditions, let alone in comparison with those of other textual communities, advises against expecting unfailing consistency between models presupposed by stories and scholastic maps. In fact, rigorous uniformity is not to be sought when placing the voices of narratives in conversation with those of scholastic texts.

That being said, according to the map sketched in the Sarvāstivāda *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, after the present Buddha Śākyamuni had made his initial resolution at the feet of the former Buddha by the same name, he then went on to render service and pay respect to

³⁶ The Pali *jātaka* seemingly shares with the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*'s *avadāna* another narrative detail, yet deployed in a different way. The monk who in the *Padīpadāna-jātaka* version receives a prediction to Buddhahood is praised as being highly accomplished, having memorised the Three Piṭakas among other achievements. This echoes the qualification of transmitter of the Three Piṭakas of the monk in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*. However the fact that a monk is a reciter of the Three Piṭakas is such a standard trope that it can hardly be used to draw any conclusion, thus the presence of this shared but variedly applied element could be just coincidental.

³⁷ T 1509 at T XXV 87a₁₂₋₁₃: 釋迦文佛，從過去釋迦文佛到刺那尸棄佛，為初阿僧祇；是中菩薩永離女人身 (in the Yuan 元, Ming 明, and Ishiyama-dera 石山寺 editions collated in the CBETA the name of the Buddha Ratnaśikhin appears as 到闍那尸棄, with 刺 for 闍); translated in Lamotte 1949: I 248.

³⁸ Wogihara 1971a: 94, 4-7: *bodhisattvaḥ prathamasyaiva kalpāsamkhyeyasyātyayāt strībhāvaṃ vijahāti bodhi-maṇḍaṇiśadanam upādāya na punar jātu strī bhavati.*

seventy-five thousand Buddhas for the duration of an incalculable aeon, which culminated with the arising in the world of the Buddha Ratnaśikhin. The Śākyamuni-to-be continued to render his service and pay respect to seventy-six thousand Buddhas for the duration of another incalculable aeon, which ended with the appearance of the Buddha Dīpaṅkara. Again, the Bodhisattva continued to render service and pay respect to seventy-seven thousand Buddhas for one more incalculable aeon, at the end of which the Buddha Vipāśyin arose in the world.³⁹ The account in the *Bhaiṣajya-vastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* is somewhat different. The names of the Buddhas to whom the Bodhisattva renders service are different, although the basic scheme of three aeons is the same as that in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* and other sources.⁴⁰

A more significant hint for tracing the *avadāna* quotation within a Mūlasarvāstivāda canonical transmission comes from verses in the *Bhaiṣajya-vastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* that correspond with the stanzas quoted by Śamathadeva.⁴¹ The lines are part of a series of stanzas spoken to Ānanda in which the Buddha gives an exposition of when, in which way, and under how many Buddhas he had rendered service in former lives. Here the bad deed of calling monks women is the only case of past bad conduct, whereas all the other lines praise the good deeds of the Bodhisattva. In this genealogy of Buddhas, the Chinese version has Ratnaśikhin, but the Tibetan *Indradhvaja or *Indradhvajamuni,⁴² and the former Buddha under whose dispensation the Bodhisattva had become learned in the Three Piṭakas is named Aparājita ([*sangs rgyas*] *gzhan gyis mi thul ba*) in the Tibetan version and Ajita (無勝

³⁹. *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* on *Abhidharmakośa* IV.110b-d (underlined), Pradhan 1967: 266,₁₂–267,₁₁: *yāvat sarvasattvānām karmādhīpatyena trisāhasramahāsāhasrako loko 'bhinivartata ity apare. buddhā eva ca tatparimāṇajñā ity apare. atha bodhisattvabhūto bhagavān kiyato buddhān paryupāsāyām āsa. prathame kalpāsamkhye pañcāptatisahasrāṇi dvitīye ṣaṣṭaptatiṃ tṛtīye saptaṣaptatiṃ ... asamkhyeyatrayāntyaajāh vipāśyīdīpakrdratnaśikhī. ratnaśikhini samyaksambuddhe prathamō 'samkhyeyaḥ samāptaḥ. dīpaṅkare bhagavati dvitīyaḥ. vipāśyini tathāgate tṛtīyaḥ. sarveṣāṃ tu teṣāṃ. śākyamuniḥ purā. śākyamunir nāma samyaksambuddhaḥ pūrvam babhūva. yatra bhagavatā bodhisattvabhūtenādyam prañidhānam kṛtam evamprakāra evāhaṃ buddho bhavēyam iti*; T 1559 at T XXIX 249b₂₂–c₅ and T 1558 at T XXIX 95a₁₄–b₃ (translated in de La Vallée Poussin 1980 [1924]: III 227–228; D 4090, *mngon pa, ku*, 220a₅ult and P 5590, *mngon pa'i bstan bcos, gu*, 257a₅ult). Cf. also, e.g., the *Vibhāṣā* treatise, T 1545 at T XXVII 892c₉ult, Saṅghabhadra's *Abhidharma* commentary in T 1562 at T XXIX 591a₂₄–b₁₁ and the **Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* referred to above, T 1509 at T XXV 87a₄ult (translated in Lamotte 1949: I 248–249). Wangchuk 2007: 100–102 observes that “if the Buddha-to-be had indeed accumulated all the prerequisites necessary for becoming a *buddha* during these three immeasurable aeons, he must have, according to the *Abhidharmakośa*, become a *buddha* sometime shortly thereafter. But since he is said to have become a *buddha* only much later, this would imply that there was an idle period of time during which he did not exert himself towards his awakening”. He further indicates that such an implication obviously posed a scholastic problem to the tradition, with different positions taken by different schools and exegetical perspectives.

⁴⁰. D 1, 'dul ba, kha, 275b₁₋₄ and P 1030, 'dul ba, ge, 254b₆₋₈. The discrepancy has already been noted by Wangchuk 2007: 101, who observes that the presentation in the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* is identified by Daśa-balaśrīmitra as being that of the Sāṃmitīya school. On the Sāṃmitīyas see now Skilling 2016.

⁴¹. D 1, 'dul ba, kha, 276a₄₋₅ and P 1030, 'dul ba, ge, 255a₈–b₂: *sangs rgyas gzhan gyis mi thul ba'i || nga sngon sde snod gsum pa las || dge slong dge 'dun rtsod pa la || dge 'dun la ni bud med smras || tshig gi nyes byas byung bas na || mod la bud med nyid du gyur || slar yang sems dad byas pas ni || skyes pa nyid ni thob par gyur || sngon gyi skye ba gzhan dag tu || nga ni rgyal po'i sras gyur tshe || gcen po rin cen gtsug tor la || mar me'i sbyin pas mchod byas shing* (translated in Yao 2013: 445–446); T 1448 at T XXIV 73c₂₂₋₂₇: 無勝佛世時，我曾作三藏；共大眾相競，惡罵僧為女。由斯口惡業，變我身為女；却迴心淨已，還變為丈夫。乃往過去世，曾為王子時；寶髻佛兄弟，我以燈明施。The text is missing in the Gilgit manuscript and in the newly identified Sanskrit manuscript of the *Bhaiṣajya-vastu*. I am indebted to Yao Fumi 八尾 史 for kindly bringing this occurrence as well as the Tocharian manuscript in Ogihara 2016 to my attention.

⁴². D 1, 'dul ba, kha, 275b₃ and P 1030, 'dul ba, ge, 254b₇: *dbang po'i rgyal mtshan thub pa* for *Indradhvaja (as reconstructed in Yao 2013: 444 note 5) or *Indradhvajamuni (Wangchuk 2007: 101), and T 1448 at T XXIV 73c₂₇: 寶髻.

[佛]) in Chinese, similar to *mi pham ma* for Ajita used in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*,⁴³ with the two names obviously referring to the same Buddha.⁴⁴

Two distinct past Samyaksambuddhas by the name of Aparājita(dhvaja) and Ajita are known, if merely by name, from the *Mahāvastu* of the Mahāsāṅghika-Lokottaravāda *Vinaya*, where they appear side by side in the context of the *Bahubuddhaka-sūtra* (II) listing of which particular Buddha in turn predicted which Buddha, a listing that parallels the just mentioned Buddhological genealogy in the *Bhaiṣajya-vastu*. The lineage of Buddhas is announced to Ānanda by the present Buddha Śākyamuni, with the Buddha Aparājita being proclaimed by the Buddha Dhvajamaparājita.⁴⁵ In the *Bahubuddhaka-sūtra* (I^B) of the same *Mahāvastu*, the Buddha recounts to Maudgalyāyana that in the past he had rendered homage to the Buddha Dhvajamaparājita together with his community of disciples for an entire aeon.⁴⁶ The Buddha Aparājitadhvaja also appears in the prologue to the *Mahāvastu*, the *Nidānanamaskāra*, where the life at the time of the Buddha Aparājitadhvaja covers the first period of the Bodhisattva's planting the seeds of goodness (*avaropitakuśalamūla*) corresponding to the first cluster of deeds (*cāryas*) of his epochal career.⁴⁷ Immediately after Aparājitadhvaja follows the former Śākyamuni, under whom the Bodhisattva's first formulation of the aspiration to Buddhahood takes place according to this tradition.⁴⁸

From the Mahāsāṅghika-Lokottaravāda back to the Mūlasarvāstivāda textual world, the *Bhaiṣajya-vastu* mentions the Bodhisattva's lamp offering to the Buddha Ratnaśikhin (a motif also found in the narrative counterparts mentioned above), but does not, however, explicitly connect it to the story of sex change. Moreover, the Bodhisattva as the donor to Ratnaśikhin appears here as the son, not the daughter, of a king. A direct parallel to the *Bhaiṣajya-vastu* stanza that speaks of a king's daughter's (rather than of a king's son) offering to the Buddha Ratnaśikhin as the conclusion of the first aeon of the Bodhisattva's epochal career is encapsulated in a Sanskrit verse written above a mural painting in cave temple no. 9 in Bāzāklīk, a settlement in the Greater Sarvāstivāda Tocharian-speaking region of Turfan.⁴⁹ In

^{43.} D 1, 'dul ba, kha, 276a₄ and P 1030, 'dul ba, ge, 255a₈; T 1448 at T XXIV 73c₂₂.

^{44.} Besides, normally *ajita* features as an epithet of the future Buddha Maitreya; for occurrences of the name Ajita see Anālayo 2010: 113 and Anālayo 2014b: 21–22. For an inscriptional witness Poonacha 2011: 43 (plate CXXVIIID) and Nakanishi and von Hinüber 2014: 79. *Aparājita* also appears as a Buddha epithet, see, e.g., the *Mahāvastu* in Senart 1890: II 264,¹⁴, II 267,²⁰ etc.

^{45.} Senart 1897: III 230,^{10–11}: *dhvajamaparājita ānanda tathāgato aparājitaṃ tathāgataṃ vyākārṣīt. aparājito ānanda tathāgato supratāpam tathāgataṃ vyākārṣīt* (translated in Jones 1956: III 224); see Tournier 2017: 105, 180 (tableau 2.5), 132–133 and 181; cf. also Edgerton 1953: II 44, s.v. *Aparājita*. On the imperfect but well attested identity between Aparājitadhvaja and Dhvajamaparājita see Tournier 2017: 181 with note 201. I refer to the *Bahubuddhaka-sūtras* of the *Mahāvastu* on the basis of Tournier 2017: 127–143.

^{46.} Senart 1882: I 60,¹⁰–61,² (new edition in Tournier 2017: 445–446; translated in Jones 1949: III 50 and Tournier 2017: 491).

^{47.} Senart 1882: I 1,^{4–6}: *namo aparājitadhvajāya tathāgatāyārhatē samyaksambuddhāya. yasyāntike 'nenaiva bhagavatā śākyamuninā prathamam kuśalamūlāni avaropitāni rājñā cakravartibhūtena adau prakṛticaryāyām pravartamānena* (new edition in Tournier 2017: 46; translated in Jones 1949: I 1 and Tournier 2017: 475). See the discussion in Tournier 2017: 191–192, 194, 203–204, 205 (tableau 2.7), 233, 274 note 73 and 207 note 275.

^{48.} Tournier 2017: 233.

^{49.} Grünwedel 1924: II 81: *rājñā sutāham abhūvan pūrvam anyāsu jātiṣu | bhr(āta)raṃ Ratnaśikhī saṃdipataila upasthitaḥ prathamāsaṃkhyeyāvasāna*, first published by von Le Coq 1913: plate 25. Lüders 1913: 876 note 2 reads *sutāha* as standing for *sutoham*, with *suto* 'son' instead of *sutā* 'daughter', which finds support in the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*'s *rgyal po'i sras* in D 1, 'dul ba, kha, 276a_{4–5} and 王子時 in T 1448 at T XXIV 73c_{26–27}, and also corrects Ratnaśikhin *saṃdipataila* to Ratnaśikhin *saḍipataila*. I hesitate to emend the text to *suto*, all the more so in view of the comparatively numerous variations that characterize the transmission of the different versions of this and similar stories; on the significance of such variations see Dhammānā 2015 and 2015/2016. The original reading is also preserved by Murakami 1984: 6 ("Long long ago, in another birth, I was a princess, Offered oil of a lamp to my brother Ratnaśikhin"), 169 and 175, Pinault 1993–1994: 194 ("Moi, je

addition, a Tocharian manuscript fragment corresponding to the passage in the *Bhaiṣajya-vastu* verses includes two elements that are absent in the latter but present in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*'s prose: the Bodhisattva's birth as a woman for five hundred lives and the recovery of male sex through the Buddha Ratnaśikhin.⁵⁰

Interestingly, the set of stanzas in the *Bhaiṣajya-vastu* concludes with the footer "the 'Chapter on Many Buddhas' is completed" (*sangs rgyas mang po'i skabs rdzogs so*).⁵¹ This clearly echoes the indication provided by Śamathadeva after the prose excerpt from the *avadāna* by way of sourcing the subsequent stanzas: "The same is versified in a story in the 'Avadāna of Many Buddhas' (*sangs rgyas mang po'i rtogs pa brjod pa*; **Bahubuddha-avadāna* ?) of the *Kṣudraka*". That is, Śamathadeva was aware of and quoting from at least two sources: an unnamed prose source (an *avadāna* transmitted within the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* corpus ?) and a **Bahubuddha-avadāna* (?) of the *Kṣudraka* in verse. The nature of the relationship between the *Bhaiṣajya-vastu*'s 'Chapter on Many Buddhas' and the 'Avadāna of Many Buddhas' in the *Kṣudraka* cannot be established. However, as seen above, the existence of both prose and verse references to the story is firmly attested in a range of texts circulating within Mūlasarvāstivāda communities.

In conclusion, the textual network that emerges from the juxtaposition of the sources surveyed in the foregoing pages reflects a diversity of environments where the story cited in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā* and the Buddhological model it presupposes were known. Such network puts the framing of the tale as an *avadāna* into a broader textual horizon. In fact, the circulation of the tale of the past life of the Buddha as a woman and her change of sex within the Sarvāstivāda or, more precisely, Mūlasarvāstivāda world, have long been noted, respectively, by Lüders (1913) and Huber (1914: 9–14).⁵²

Avadānas are basically multi-life stories of the Bodhisattva's path, belonging to the genre of 'literatures of the path', whose production and circulation increased exponentially in the course of the Middle Period of Buddhism in India.⁵³ A keen interest in such literature of the path is a key feature of the *Kṣudraka* (or *Khuddaka*) collections, which include discourses of the Buddha on his past deeds, the previous births of the Bodhisattva as well as various forms of praise of the Buddha.⁵⁴ Tradition itself was aware of this feature of the *Kṣudraka*: Śākyamuni's course as a Bodhisattva across the three incalculable aeons prior to the achievement of supreme awakening is expressly mentioned as the focus of the *Kṣudraka-piṭaka* in the Chinese commentary on the *Ekottarika-āgama* (增一阿含經疏, T 1507) and its literary antecedent, the 'Narrative of the Compilation of the Three *Piṭakas* and of the *Kṣudraka-piṭaka*' (撰集三藏及雜藏傳, T 2026), an account of the First Saṅgīti relating the

fus une fille de roi, antérieurement dans d'autres naissances, j'ai honoré mon frère Ratnaśikhin avec une lampe à huile") and Konczak 2012 [2014]: 246 ("Früher, in anderen Geburten, war ich eine Königstochter, Ich verehrte meinen Bruder Ratnaśikhin mit Lampenöl"), whereas Grünwedel 1924: II 81 ("Früher, in anderen Geburten, war ich der Sohn eines Königs. Ich verehrte meinen Bruder Ratnaśikhin mit einer Öllampe") and Chanwit Tudkeao 2012: 53 follow Lüders 1913: 876 ("Früher in anderen Geburten war ich der Sohn eines Königs. Ich verehrte meinen Bruder Ratnaśikhin mit einer Öllampe").

⁵⁰ Fragment B400a₁–b₃ in Ogihara 2016: 216.

⁵¹ D 1, 'dul ba, kha, 279b₄ and P 1030, 'dul ba, ge, 258b₄; T 1448 at T XXIV 76a₁: 已上諸佛名. On the **Bahubuddhādhikāra* of the *Bhaiṣajya-vastu* see also Tournier 2017: 133–134.

⁵² See also the English summary in Murakami 1984: 4–8.

⁵³ See Dhammadinnā 2015/2016: 36 with note 7.

⁵⁴ On the *Kṣudraka-piṭaka* and the *Khuddaka-nikāya* in general see Lamotte 1956 and 1957; on the character of the *Kṣudraka-piṭaka* see also Palumbo 2013: 105, 108, 110 with note 29, 114, 214, 215 with note 70 and 221–226. On the *Kṣudraka* in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā* see Honjō 2014: I 32–33; a reference to an "Arthavarga-sūtra of the *Kṣudraka*" (or perhaps an *Arthavargīya* section) in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā* was already noted by Sakurabe 1956: 160 note 4.

recitation on that occasion of the Tripiṭaka and of a *Kṣudraka-piṭaka*.⁵⁵ In other words, the possibility that the *Kṣudraka* mentioned by Śamathadeva is to be understood as a canonical collection (*piṭaka* or *āgama*) rather than a scriptural division of a Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* is an attractive one, but far from proven.

To remain instead within the world of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, I now briefly look at the theme of change of sex – central to the *avadāna* storyline – in that context.

The Vinaya context

In a Vinaya context, discussions of change of sex have a part to play in relation to the legal and ritual acts of the *saṅgha*, that is, the ordination ritual and protocols related to admission into the monastic community and the observance of its monastic rules. Instances of spontaneous sexual metamorphosis are on record not only in Sarvāstivāda/Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya literature but also, for example, in the Theravāda commentarial tradition.⁵⁶ Petra Kieffer-Pülz's (2018) contribution to this volume studies sex change in Buddhist legal literature, thus I refer the reader to her article for a more technical discussion.

Suffice it to say, for my present purpose, that the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* does not appear to attach any negative moral judgement to the phenomenon of change of sex,⁵⁷ which is not dealt with from a karmic perspective in the sense of being described in terms of the result of good or bad deeds. A similar pattern is observable in the Theravāda *Vinaya*, which dispenses with a gendered evaluation when presenting the loss of the female characteristic and its replacement with a male characteristic, without crediting the former to bad and the latter to good karma, whereas a different position characterises the Theravāda commentarial and narrative traditions.⁵⁸

The topic of sex change becomes especially prominent in the context of the Sarvāstivāda/Mūlasarvāstivāda Indo-Tibetan monastic traditions. In general, such discussions of change of sex occur at the interface, as it were, between Vinaya and Abhidharma on account of the relationship established in Sarvāstivāda/Mūlasarvāstivāda Vaibhāṣika metaphysics

^{55.} Discussed in Palumbo 2013: 227–229 and 318 note 4. The section detailing the recitation of the Three Piṭakas and the *Kṣudraka-piṭaka* and outlining the contents of the collections is found in T 2026 at T 3a7–4a9, translated in Przyluski 1926: 103–110. On T 2026 in general see Palumbo 2013: 108–124.

^{56.} E.g., the commentary on the Theravāda *Vinaya*, Sp I 273,23–28 on Vin III 35,12–24 (*pārājika* 1), the *Nidāna* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* 1.1.1 in Kishino 2013: 103 (translated in Kishino 2013: 319) or the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya-sūtra* 618–619 by Guṇaprabha located in the *Pracchāgata* division of the section commenting on the *Pravrajyā-vastu*, Bapat and Gokhale 1982: xli and 54,4–11, which takes up the case of sex change occurring during the performance of an ordination; for further discussion and references see, e.g., Bapat 1957 and Gyatso 2003: 110–111. Cf. also, in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*, Up 4070 in D 4094, *mngon pa, ju*, 233a5–7 and P 5595, *mngon pa, tu*, 266b1–4, citing *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* Pradhan 1967: 232,8 on *Abhidharmakośa* IV.56: *yathā śaṇḍhasya gavām apuṃstvapratiṃmokṣaṇāt pumbhāvaḥ*; D 4090, *mngon pa, ku*, 195a7–195b1 and P 5590, *mngon pa'i bstan bcos, gu*, 226b3–4: *bsam pa'i khyad par las ni dper na nyud a rum zhig gis glang zhig rlig pa dbyud ba las thar bar byas pas skyes pa nyid du gyur pa lta bu'o*; T 1559 at T XXIX 238c8–9: 如傳說。有一黃門。由解脫牛黃門事故。現身即轉根成男 and T 1558 at T XXIX 82b18–20: 聞有黃門救脫諸牛黃門事故。彼於現世轉作丈夫。此等傳聞事亦非一。 Japanese translation of Up 4070 in Honjō 2014: I 585.

^{57.} According to Finnegan 2009: 136 the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* “does not distinguish in any significant way between female-to-male and male-to-female transformations. Were it the case that the *MSV* [Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*] imagined that sex change from male to female was associated with ‘extraordinarily negative conduct’ whereas female-to-male transformation could only result from acts of great beneficence, then it would be unthinkable that an ordained woman could become a man while breaking every manner of monastic rule ... but this is precisely what this section of the *MSV* [the *Uttaragrantha*] envisions, again and again and again. John Powers’ [2009: 137] comment of ‘Indian Buddhist literature’ that ‘when men change to women it is commonly portrayed as a tragedy for them and as a result of extraordinarily negative conduct’ ... is most emphatically not the case in this instance of Indian Buddhist literature”.

^{58.} See Anālayo 2014a: 111–114 and Kieffer-Pülz 2018: I 2, II 7.

between the notion of the subtle material form known as ‘un-manifest’ or ‘non-informative’ materiality (*avijñaptirūpa*) and the taking on and commitment to the monastic rule, notably the *prātimokṣa*.

The undertaking of the *prātimokṣa* is classified as related to one out of three kinds of *avijñaptirūpa*.⁵⁹ Such a special type of *avijñaptirūpa* comes into being when an individual first accepts the monastic discipline and it lasts in the mental continuum until the person either gives it up, passes away or, according to some sources, undergoes a spontaneous change of sex. It confers what is conceived of as serial karmic continuity, called *anubandha* or *pravāha*, to monastic precepts in the mind of the monk or the nun. Here Greene (2016: 114–116) has made the important point that “[a]lthough scholars have often understood it as a device for explaining karmic continuity, *avijñapti-karma* (and hence *avijñapti-rūpa*) was not posited by Sarvāstivāda sources as a general solution to the problem of karma (other theories, notably the theory of the existence of dharmas in the three times, fulfilled that role). Rather, the original motivation for *avijñapti-karma*, and the most important area where it was discussed in later sources, was as an explanation of the power of *saṃvara*, moral or disciplinary restraint. ... Given its early use as an explanation for the ontology of certain kinds of non-doing, it is not surprising that *avijñapti-karma* was eventually invoked in the context of *śīla*, the precepts. Indeed the precepts, both monastic and lay, are precisely an elaboration of the parts of the eightfold path connected to outward behaviour-right speech, action, and livelihood (mental action by itself is never a violation of the precepts). Within later Sarvāstivāda thought, it was as an explanation of the ontology of *śīla* (discussed under the category of *saṃvara*, ‘restraint’) that *avijñapti-karma*, and hence *avijñapti-rūpa*, would become most important”.

For instance, the *Pañcaskandhabhāṣya* lists among the reasons for giving up the various kinds of discipline based on the monastic rule (*prātimokṣasaṃvara*) the occurrence of the male or female organ, since then the *prātimokṣa* of the other sex would become the one to be followed.⁶⁰ However, according to the position taken in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, a change in the sexual characteristic (*liṅga*)⁶¹ simply leads to the modification of the gender in that a monk (*bhikṣu*) becomes a nun (*bhikṣuṇī*) or vice versa a nun becomes a monk, but it is not the case that a person, by changing his or her sex, abandons the former discipline and acquires a new one. The change of sex is therefore not seen as amounting to the loss of the respective *prātimokṣa* or, by implication, of the *avijñaptirūpa* that accompanies it. In this respect, the *prātimokṣa* of both orders, male and female, are considered identical.⁶²

Now the legal act of consenting to the establishment of the ordination candidate in the holy life, the *brahmacaryopasthānasamvṛti*, is according to the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* a necessary step in the ordination procedure. Here the term *saṃvṛti* ‘allowance; agreement; consent’, was customarily translated into Tibetan by the term *sdom pa*, which also carries the sense of ‘vow’.⁶³ It seems to me that this new notion of a ‘vow’ marks a shift from a legal and ritual understanding of ordination acts to a metaphysical level of understanding, which is the

^{59.} See, e.g., Gokhale 1938, Yamada 1962, Dowling 1976, Dhammajoti 2007: 44, Greene 2016 and Stuart 2017; on the *avijñaptirūpa* in relation to the *prātimokṣa* ‘vow’ see especially Kramer 2013: 94, Newhall 2014 and Greene 2016 (with references to previous literature).

^{60.} Cf. Kramer 2013: 94 and Tsedroen and Anālayo 2013: 761 note 66.

^{61.} This is explained as the attribute (*vyañjana*) that distinguishes men and women.

^{62.} *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* on *Abhidharmakośa* IV.14c, Pradhan 1967: 206₁₋₇; D 4090, *mngon pa, ku*, 176b₃ and P 5591, *mngon pa 'i bstan bcos, gu*, 203a₅; T 1559 at T XXIX 229c₂₉–230a₇ and T 1558 at T XXIX 72b₂₉–c₉ (translated in de La Vallée Poussin 1980 [1924]: III 44–45).

^{63.} On *saṃvṛti* in *Vinaya* context see Kieffer-Pülz 1992: 366–371, Hu-von Hinüber 1994: 198–199, Mrozik 2007: 146 note 74, Kieffer-Pülz 2010: 218 note 4, Kishino 2015 and Yao 2015: 220 with note 11.

way monastic ordination is generally conceptualised in the living Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition to this day. A ‘precept vow’ is conferred and upheld in lieu of a simpler notion of admittance into and belonging to a voluntary community on the basis of a personal and communal agreement to abide by a set of rules. It remains open to question whether the cardinal importance of a set of vows received through an initiation (*samaya*) in the Indo-Tibetan Vajrayāna textual and religious traditions contributed to this development. Be that as it may, the notion of *avijñaptirūpa* and *avijñaptikarma* in relation to the *prātimokṣasaṃvara* and hence the karmic consequences of breaking vows appear to stretch beyond the legal or procedural aspects of *Vinaya* jurisprudence into the territory of metaphysics. This might well be the reason why the philosophical and legal consequences of a change of sex became indeed an object of much debate in the Indo-Tibetan scholastic tradition, a debate that falls outside my present topic.

All the same, the story of a monk’s change of sex – be it originally transmitted in a canonical *avadāna* collection or as an *avadāna* in the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* – could have been put to use in the context of monastic education to exemplify the case of a spontaneous change of sex.

Whereas the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* and its related commentaries simply mention the sex change episode as illustrations of the scholastic notion of presently effective karmic retribution, the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā* stands out for framing the incident as an *avadāna*, a framing that results in the Bodhisattva undergoing a change of sex to female *after* he had embarked on his multi-life journey to Buddhahood. In what follows I draw attention to the significance of the sex change element in relation to ‘gendered’ karma and soteriology, firstly focusing on the motif of the (unwelcome) change of sex to female and then, by way of conclusion, on what this motif implies in relation to the path of the Bodhisattva.

The (unwelcome) change of sex to female as an illustration of presently effective karma: a gendered evaluation?

Far from being a Buddhist innovation, the motif of sex change is widespread in Indian and worldwide folklore. Evidence ranges from metamorphoses during a specific lifetime to the taking on of a different sex upon being reborn, with instances featured in mythological and homiletic contexts.⁶⁴ Nearly a century ago Brown (1927) proposed a basic threefold categorisation of change of sex in Indian literature that, from the viewpoint of the person who undergoes such a change, can be classified into:

- (a) unexpected and unwelcome (for example, a man becomes a woman in consequence of a curse or an impious thought or from bathing in an enchanted pool);
- (b) unexpected and welcome (for example, by chance a *yakṣa* is found who is willing to exchange sex with a woman, or else a pool is accidentally discovered that converts a female into a male);
- (c) expected and welcome (for example, by deliberate propitiation a *yakṣa* is made willing to exchange sex with a woman, or else a magical pill is used or an act of asseveration of truth is performed to obtain a change of sex).⁶⁵

^{64.} See, e.g., Penzer 1927: VII 222–223 and the repertory in Thompson and Balys 1958: 97–111 (esp. no. D10); cf. also the remarks in Dimitrov 2004: 13 and Dhammadinnā 2015: 503–504. Brown 1927 and, more recently, Esposito 2013 are the two most important general studies of sex change in Indian literature I am aware of.

^{65.} A fourth type (d), a change both expected and unwelcome, is theoretically possible and there seems to be at least one such occurrence detected by Brown 1927 in his survey but, generally speaking, changes of sex attested in literature never tend to be both expected and unwelcome for in that case they would be avoided by the protagonists of the stories.

The case of the monk's change into a female in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā* and other texts seen above would fit within the first category (unexpected and unwelcome). In this connection, "it is interesting to note the acceptance by the literature without argument that a change from woman to man is always desirable while the reverse is always undesirable" in Indian literature.⁶⁶ A change of sex to male is considered as advantageous and progressive in numerous traditional folktales worldwide. This is natural as, in patriarchal societies, becoming a man obviously signals an upgrade in socio-economic position and prestige. Indian Buddhist discourse also reflects the same idea that a change from a female to a male body is indeed desirable, whereas the opposite is typically seen as negative (with specific exceptions to the rule).⁶⁷

The key doctrinal interest in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* context where sex change is given as an illustration lies in the mechanics of presently effective karmic retribution. The technical term *dr̥ṣṭadharmavedanīya* (cf. also its Pali equivalent *diṭṭhadhammavedanīya*) qualifies an action or a fruit to be felt or experienced (*vedanīya*) by having as a basic principle (*dharma*, Pali *dhamma*) the fact that it is 'seen' (*dr̥ṣṭa*, Pali *diṭṭha*); the reference to seeing conveys a sense of "immediacy".⁶⁸

A concept to a degree related to presently effective karmic retribution is that of the five *ānantaryakarmas*, grave moral lapses with immediate retribution.⁶⁹ These derive their name from the idea that their effect – rebirth in hell – makes itself felt immediately at the breakup of the body at the end of the present lifetime, without any possibility of one or more intermediate births prior to the ripening of the evil karma as existence in hell. For instance, to cause a split within the *saṅgha* is one of the actions included in this fivefold list. The *saṅgha* epitomises the specific or distinctive nature or quality of the field (*kṣetraviśeṣa*) with respect to which the karma is performed, as discussed in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* passage excerpted above. Thus to harbour ill will and speak offensively towards the *saṅgha* of a Buddha is chosen as a paradigmatic example for presently effective karmic repercussion.

Although to revile one's co-monastics is of course not necessarily schismatic in intention, the attitude behind such reviling could pave the way to splits in the community and therein to one of the five heinous crimes. It is educationally apt that the story in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā* should describe a monk's inability to restrain himself during a conflict with other monks, a pattern that recurs with the Kauśāmbī dispute. The verbally insinuating monk was a learned reciter of the Tripiṭaka, but nevertheless he was expelled by a monk reciter of the *sūtras* so as to settle the litigation. In other words, the conceit of being

⁶⁶. In the words of Brown 1927: 6.

⁶⁷. Transformations may also result in neither male nor female sex, cf. Esposito 2013: 503 note 1.

⁶⁸. On *diṭṭhadhammavedanīya* in relation to karma in the context of Pali texts see von Hinüber 1971 (esp. 242–243 for a survey of relevant occurrences in the Pali discourses), with a critical response in Anālayo 2011: II 779–780 note 118 and further discussion in Gethin 2015; for a presentation from a traditional Theravāda perspective see Pa Auk 2012: 152–163. In the case of Theravāda scholasticism, *diṭṭhadhammavedanīya* is explained in the light of the theory of mental impulses (*javanas*) typical of the Pali Abhidhamma. It is defined as the unwholesome or wholesome volition of the first in the series of seven impulsions (*javanacetanā*) of the cognitive process (*cittavīthi*); cf., e.g., Vism-mṭ 685 at 235.₂₉–236.₂: *tesu ekajavanavīthiyaṃ sattasu cittesu kusalā vā akusalā vā paṭhamajavanacetanā diṭṭhadhammavedanīyakammaṃ nāma. taṃ imasmiññ eva attabhāve vipākam deti*. This places it on a depth of mental impulse comparable to the exceptional mental proclivity (*āśrayaviśeṣa*) discussed in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* that constitutes one of the two factors for *dr̥ṣṭadharmavedanīya* in the Sarvāstivāda/Mūlasarvāstivāda schema. Needless to say, the Sarvāstivāda/Mūlasarvāstivāda and Theravāda Abhidharmic schemas construct the notions of *dr̥ṣṭadharmavedanīya* and *diṭṭhadhammavedanīya* on the basis of their respective scholastic categories.

⁶⁹. On these five crimes see, e.g., Silk 2007.

learned (but unwise) can lead to dogmatism,⁷⁰ which is in turn a precursor to quarrels and disputes in the community.⁷¹ This is so grave a matter that even the Buddha himself is still receiving the effects of such an attitude.

An additional karmic thread is perhaps worthy of note: given that the matter of contention at Kauśāmbī were minor aspects of the Vinaya, the detail in the *Abhidharmakośa-vyākhyā* that the insulting monk had been defeated in a legal procedure is particularly relevant. If read in conjunction with the *avadāna* in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*, it connects the past-life of the Buddha as a monk angered in relation to points of Vinaya directly to the Kauśāmbī dispute. Yet another parallelism that comes to mind is that in both litigations the Buddha's voice is not heard. In the past, when he was a monk, he was expelled; in the present case, when he is the actual legislator of the Vinaya, his monks just ignore him. Also, the somewhat arrogant speech of calling others women returns by way of *contrappasso* when one of the Kauśāmbī monk tells him to rather leave the business of the dispute to them. In a discourse version of the Kauśāmbī litigation in the *Madhyama-āgama* (a collection transmitted within a Sarvāstivāda context)⁷² some of the monks who have just heard what the Buddha had tried to say – inviting them to exercise restraint, be patient and join in harmony – tell him, the master of the Dharma, to stop talking, and argue that since those of the opposite faction are telling them what to do they are likewise entitled to tell them what to do.⁷³ In a parallel in the *Majjhima-nikāya* it is just one monk who up to three times says to the Buddha, that he should rather live at ease devoted to a pleasant abiding here and now, for they are the ones who will be responsible for the quarrelling and dispute.⁷⁴ A parallel passage in the *Kosambaka-kkhandhaka* of the Theravāda *Vinaya*'s *Mahāvagga* qualifies this monk as an *adhammavādī*, one who does not speak in conformity with the Dhamma.⁷⁵ A version in the *Kosāmbaka-vastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* also features multiple monks who address the Buddha together, as in the *Madhyama-āgama*.⁷⁶ In a third discourse parallel found in the *Ekottarika-āgama* the group of monks similarly tell the Buddha not to concern himself with the matter at hand.⁷⁷ In the first case, when the Buddha was a monk, he is seemingly asserting his position to the point that the other monks ejected him, at which he somewhat self-righteously reacts by comparing them to women. In the second case, the scenario is quite the

70. Dogmatism is reckoned as the fourth bodily knot (*kāyagrantha*) in a fourfold listing in the *Saṅgīti-paryāya*, an early canonical Abhidharma text of the Sarvāstivādins, T 1536 at T XXVI 399c₂₃; 實執取身繫 (cf. the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* reconstructed in Stache-Rosen 1968: 118); see also the *Jñānaprasthāna*, T 1544 at T XXVI 929b₁₈, and the **Mahāvibhāṣā*, T 1545 at T XXVII 248c₈.

71. Somaratne 2012 gives a reading of conflict management in the *Sāmagāma-sutta* (MN 104) in the light of their applicability as conflict resolution methods in contemporary society.

72. Anālayo 2017b.

73. MĀ 72 at T I 535b₁₉₋₂₁: 於是，諸比丘聞佛所說，有作是言：「世尊法主今且住也，彼導說我，我那得不導說彼。」. For a comparative study of all the parallel versions of this episode see Anālayo 2011: II 731–734; cf. also Anālayo 2011: I 204.

74. MN 128 at MN III 153₁₁₋₁₅: *evaṃ vutte aññataro bhikkhu bhagavantam etad avoca: āgametu, bhante, bhagavā dhammassāmi, appossukko, bhante, bhagavā diṭṭhadhammasukhavihāraṃ anuyutto viharatu; mayam etena bhaṇḍanena kalahena viggahena vivādena paññāyissāmi ti.*

75. Vin I 341₃₁₋₃₂: *aññataro adhammavādī bhikkhu.*

76. Dutt 1984: III.2 186₁₋₃: *evam ukte kośāmbakā bhikṣavo bhagavantam idam avocan: dharmasvāmī bhagavān dharmasvāmī sugataḥ ete 'smākaṃ vakṣyanti duruktāni durbhāṣitāni, vāyam eṣāṃ kimarthaṃ marṣayāma iti;* D 1, 'dul ba, ga, 129a₆₋₇ and P 1030, 'dul ba, nge, 124b₃₋₅: *de skad ces bka' stsal pa dang kau sām bī'i dge slong gis bcom ldan 'das la 'di skad ces gsol to: bcom ldan 'das ni chos kyi rje lags, bde bar gshegs pa ni chos kyi rje lags na. 'di rnam bdag cag la tshig ngan pa dang mi snyan pa mchi na bdag cag gis de rnam la ci'i slad du bzod bar bgyi lags;* T 1421 at T XXII 160a₈₋₉: 諸比丘復白佛言：「世尊！願安隱住！佛雖法主，我自知之。」.

77. EĀ 24.8 at T II 626b_{29-c1}: 諸比丘對曰：「此是我等事，世尊勿足慮此事。」.

opposite. In spite of the Buddha being the law-maker, no heed is paid to him. Instead of asserting his own absolute right to settle the dispute or issuing a new rule to silence the monks, he goes away and leaves the quarrelsome *saṅgha* behind.

Returning to the motif of change of sex to a female as a form of immediate fruition of bad karma, this is also found in the *Soreyyatthera-vatthu*, the ‘Story of the Elder Soreyya’ in the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā*, the Pali commentary on the canonical stanzas of the *Dhammapada* collection transmitted by the Theravāda tradition.⁷⁸ The main topic of the *Soreyyatthera-vatthu* is the story of a double change of sex from male to female and back to male in the same lifetime. This happened to a layman who had had thoughts of passion towards an eminent monk disciple of the Buddha, the venerable Mahākaccāyana. In the story, the merchant Soreyya, seeing the elder Mahākaccāyana’s golden-hued skin, had the impure wish that the elder become his wife or that the skin of his wife’s body become as attractive as that of the elder’s body. The merchant instantly becomes a woman, now known by the name of Soreyyā. Eventually, Soreyyā regrets having had such lustful feelings and, through the kind offices of a former friend to whom she discloses her previous identity, obtains a chance to beg the elder’s pardon, which the monk readily grants. As soon as the elder utters his words of pardon, Soreyyā is transformed back into Soreyya. As is only natural with narrative genre, the *Soreyyatthera-vatthu* does not contain any explicit scholastic statement to the effect that the sex change is to be understood as an instance of presently effective karmic retribution, yet this notion appears to be presupposed by the turn of events. This time the action in question is of a merely mental rather than verbal type as in the case of the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*’s *avadāna*. In the *Soreyyatthera-vatthu* the karmic field that receives the action is also outstanding in that it is constituted by an individual who is not only a member of the Buddha’s monastic community but who is also one of the Buddha’s eminent disciples, and presumably assumed by the text to be already an arhat at that time, thus at the highest position in the *saṅgha* of the noble ones.

As mentioned above, a central purpose of *avadānas/apadānas* is didactic: “to explore, within a particular Buddhist framework, the doctrine that good actions based on good intentions bring about good results and bad actions based on bad intentions bring about bad results”.⁷⁹ A normative exposition on karma such as is found in the fourth chapter of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* – even if it comes with many technicalities – remains, in essence, an exposition of moral philosophy. It thus has practical relevance to the making of moral choices and thereby it serves an educational purpose. In fact, as noted by Esposito (2013: 506), stories about change of sex in Jain and Buddhist texts have less of the humorous element often found in such stories in early Indian literature and have more prominently a didactic motivation.

Now literary and iconographic *karmavibhaṅgas*, ‘classifications’ and therein ‘elucidations’ of karma, flourished copiously throughout the Buddhist world. The reward of a particular intentional action manifesting in the form of a result either closely similar (positive analogy) or diametrically opposite (negative analogy) is analysed and exemplified in detail in the exposition on karmic relationships in various versions of the discourse on *karmavibhaṅga*, an early Buddhist text that stands out for having an exceptionally high number of parallels preserved in a variety of languages. The popularity of this text must be due to its

⁷⁸. *Soreyyatthera-vatthu*, Dhpa I 325,¹¹–332,²² on Dhpa 43, translated in Burlingame 1929: II 23–28. The motif of change of sex in this story has already been commented upon by Brown 1927: 21, Bapat 1957: 212, Esposito 2013: 514–515, Ohnuma 2007: 98–99, Ohnuma 2012: 17–18 and Anālayo 2014a: 109–110. I discuss this story and argue against its ‘gendered’ reading proposed by Ohnuma in a separate publication in preparation.

⁷⁹. Cutler 1994: 2.

function in the service of Buddhist homiletics.⁸⁰

The illustration of the workings of karma by means of a change of sex is informed by the same *karmavibhaṅga* logic. Thus, for example, the Buddha explains that when a man or a woman is given to injuring beings, if after death they come back to the human state, they suffer from poor health. This is because of having undertaken such injuring actions. If not reborn in the human plane of existence, they are bound to reappear in a state of deprivation. Conversely, those who abstain from injuring beings, if they come back to the human state are healthy. If not reborn in the human world, they reappear in a heavenly realm.⁸¹

Notably, rebirth as a woman is conspicuously absent in all the parallel versions of the discourse on *karmavibhaṅga*. This gives “the impression that sex was considered only incidental to the question of rebirth at the time when the different versions of this discourse came into existence and reached their present form”.⁸²

Thus, although the story of change of sex and its underlying mechanics of retribution is consistent with the principle of karmic reward that is laid down in the *karmavibhaṅga* chart of karmic relationships, it is notable that, at least from the perspective of the discourse on *karmavibhaṅga*, sex at birth is not selected as a significant token of negative or positive reward. Other conditions such as poverty, obscurity, sickness etc. are recognised as inherently unfortunate and thus an ‘objective’ result of negative karma – of course open to future change and improvement, which is after all what these texts try to facilitate. This is not the case with female birth.

Yet, on reading the *avadāna*, the question suggests itself: is a gendered evaluation of karma implicitly or explicitly suggested? Is there a clearly ‘gendered’ perceptive component to the way the unwholesome mental state finds its verbal outlet? Does the bad karma rewarded through an obviously unwanted change to female and an ensuing cycle of female births assume an intrinsic negative evaluation of female birth as such?

The change of sex does not in my opinion really require a ‘karmic evaluation’ of gender in and of itself in order to effectively advocate a principle of karmic retribution. The main point at stake are the dynamics of retribution and the connection between the main ‘ingredient’ of the insult and its repercussions on the offender. The teaching seems to be on the ‘how’ of the type of karma in operation (presently effective retribution), illustrated by the ‘what’ (sex change): the change of sex is a case in point to illustrate a direct relationship between a certain verbal behaviour – a resentful remark – and its reward.

At the same time, for the illustration to work and the story to fulfil its moral task, the text must rely on certain assumptions shared by its audience. In other words, the story needs to make sense to the audience’s cognitive suppositions to work.⁸³ In the present case, firstly,

^{80.} Cf. Anālayo 2014a: 115 and 2017a: 111; a listing of the parallels and a comparative study is given in Anālayo 2011: II 767–775.

^{81.} See MĀ 170 at T I 705a₁₆₋₂₉ (parallel to the Pali *Cūḷakammavibhāṅga-sutta*, MN 135 at MN III 204,₃₋₁₇) and the Sanskrit *Karmavibhaṅga* in Kudo 2004: 50,₅–52,₄ and 2007: 97,₁₅–98,₈ (= Lévi 1932: 37,₅₋₁₇), Tibetan translation in Lévi 1932: 185,₇₋₂₄, Khotanese in Maggi 1995: 65,₁₇–67,₇ (partially preserved); other parallels to this section are listed in Anālayo 2011: II 771 note 80.

^{82.} Anālayo 2014a: 114–115; Anālayo 2014a: 116 further reasons that within such a scheme, “rebirth as a female in ancient Indian society would probably find its place under becoming ‘uninfluential.’ That is, one of the possible results of being envious now is that one will be reborn in a situation where one has to suffer discrimination. From this viewpoint, then, it would indeed be bad *karma* to be reborn as a woman if this takes place in a society where women are discriminated against. In other words, the *karma* of being reborn as a woman does not appear to be singled out as in itself negative. Female birth is only the result of bad *karma* if one is reborn in a patriarchal society—like ancient India—where women are discriminated against, and thus one finds oneself in an inferior position by dint of one’s birth as a female”.

^{83.} See also my remarks with reference to the trope of women belonging only in the kitchen as a meaningful

given that from an Indian viewpoint the possibility of sex change is taken for granted, as a ‘fact’, the episode of sexual transformation will quite probably be perceived by its intended audience as factual. Secondly, the idea of referring to the behaviour of a group of men (monks here) as being similar to that of women must be able to serve the purpose of conveying the desired message. The monk in question appears to consider the group of fellow monastics who had excluded him on account of their lack of courage to actually confront him, as similar to women. Thus a gendered evaluation is implied at least to the extent that an unwholesome action is associated with a change of sex to female⁸⁴ and the monk’s outburst implies a perception of women’s behaviour as lacking courage. Such a notion could express perceived biological differences or else have its root in the environment, in culture, in social upbringing or in one’s education – a process called ‘gendered socialisation’ in feminist studies. The text seems to implicitly adhere to an understanding of behavioural differences on the basis of ‘biology’, yet an awareness of a substantial difference between biological sex and culturally understood gender does not seem to be present.⁸⁵

To summarise, the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* and its commentaries portray the way of acting of the monk who calls the others women (*saṅghastrīvādasamudācāra*) as a specific act of (bad) karma involving a resentful mind and an act of offensive speech. The offensive utterance is coloured by a (sociocultural) judgement that is informed by a gendered cliché. Due to the fact that it is directed at the *saṅgha*, an exceptional karmic field, it meets with immediate maturation. Although it does rely on stereotyping, the text does not seem to assume an essentialised notion of womanhood, to be characterised in intrinsic terms. The very fact that sex change into and out of femaleness can occur is the opposite of any ‘essential’ immutability.

The Bodhisattva’s five hundred female births

In Indian Buddhist thought, being subject to *saṃsāra* implies the going through many forms of existence and thus taking births of different sex, for “there are no men who were not women formerly or women who were not men”,⁸⁶ since sex at birth is not given as immutable

imagery to the audience of Middle-Period literature in Dhammaddinā 2015–2016: 57–62. Silk 2014: 176 note 68 refers to the story of change of sex in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* and *vyākhyā* when commenting on the doctrinal background of the probable intended (monastic) audience of an episode of sexual transformation in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*.

^{84.} Cf. also the observation in Anālayo 2014a: 114: “the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* does reflect a gendered evaluation, as it associates the transformation of a monk into a female with an unwholesome deed, notably the unwholesome deed of calling the [male] Saṅgha [members] females”.

^{85.} Here I concur with Appleton 2012: 170 note 21. A passage in the *Atthasālinī*, the commentary on the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* of the Theravāda Abhidhamma, shows an awareness of games socially considered gender-specific in that it differentiates, for example, between girls’ games vis-à-vis boys’ toys and games, in the context of a descriptive treatment of what characterises females versus males, see As 641–642 at As 321,₃–323,₁₂ (translated in Pe Maung Tin 1976 [1921]: II 419–421). The presentation concludes with a declaration of the inferiority of the female faculty and its moral stamina, and it could be seen as an example of a biology-based understanding of behavioural differences.

^{86.} This is a commentator’s gloss in the *Soreyyatthera-vatthu* mentioned above, Dhpa 327,₃₋₄: *purisā hi itthiyo, itthiyo vā purisā abhūtapubbā nāma natthi*. The same gloss brings attention to the circumstance that “even the elder Ānanda, who had fulfilled his perfections, for hundreds of thousands of aeons and was a noble disciple” was born as a woman in several past lives, as a result of a bad deed committed as a man, in his case, indulgence in philandering, Dhpa 327,₇₋₈: *ānandatthero pi hi kappasatasahassam pūritapāramī ariyasāvako*. On this and other passages on Ānanda’s female births documenting cases in Buddhist discourse of sex inconsistency across different lifetimes cf. also Brown 1927: 23. These female births of Ānanda are also retold in a vernacular adaptation of the *Soreyyatthera-vatthu* included in the Sinhala *Saddharmaratnāvalīya*, a compilation based on the Pali *Dhammapada* commentary that was recorded in Sri Lanka by the thirteenth-century monk Dharmasena; for an

throughout the cycle of rebirth but is subject to change. Thus the motif of sex change within the same lifetime “shows that one’s sex was not seen as something immutably fixed, but rather as something fluid, depending on conditions and circumstances”.⁸⁷

At the same time, overall sex consistency across lifetimes (and in each lifetime) seems to be presupposed by most of the texts of the Indian religious traditions.⁸⁸ As a generalisation, there appears to be consistency in this respect unless a specific event disrupts it. For instance, in the literature on the bodhisattva path, the soteriological turning point consisting in the attainment of a prediction for Buddhahood has the power of effecting an irreversible change of sex to male. This is because, at least from a certain layer of textual development onwards, the dogmatics of the bodhisattva path necessitate that a confirmed bodhisattva must be male: this requires maleness at birth in the present lifetime or is to be signaled by a change of sex to male.⁸⁹

According to Appleton’s (2012: 171) preliminary results of her comparative studies of Buddhist and Jain birth stories, “it is striking that changes in gender between births are considerably more common in Jain sources than in Buddhist ones. In many cases, the change of gender is not directly linked to an action, but rather appears simply as part of a chaotic series of births. ... However, not all Jain stories portray changing gender as simply a part of the generally unpredictable and unstable process of rebirth. Apart from the many stories that show other changes – in species, realm of rebirth, and relationships – whilst portraying gender as stable, there are several in which a specific type of action is said to result in a man being reborn as a woman ... clearly [indicating] that female birth results from certain negative karma ... However, in the wider context of Jain narrative, in which changing from male to female and animal and human and back again is an accepted fact of life, I would argue that stories of sex-change ... hold less weight than their Buddhist equivalents”. She further reasons that the soteriological irrelevance of gender to the attainment of liberation is an ideal shared by Buddhist and Jain sources, yet it appears to be demonstrated in a different way by the Jains, namely “through the apparently causeless and unpredictable changes that affect a variety of characters ... Ironically, the gentle continuity of gender in Buddhist rebirth

English rendering of this version see Obeyesekere 2001: 213–218. Ānanda’s *Upāsakajanālaṅkāra*, a medieval Theravāda treatise addressed to the laity composed in Sri Lanka and dated from the beginning of the thirteenth century (Kieffer-Pülz 2015: 632), also gives a citation of the story in the *Soreyyatthera-vatthu*, and an account of the multi-life story of Ānanda’s philandering due to his association with bad friends and facing varied disgraces as a result of his unlawful lust; see Saddhatissa 1965: 217,^{12–16} (§ 115) = Dhpa I 327,^{3–7}. Yet another female birth of Ānanda, which he similarly obtained as a result of philandering, is recorded in the *samodhāna* – the connecting literary module that identifies characters in a *jātaka* or *avādāna* tale with characters in the present – of the *Mahānārada-kassapa-jātaka*, a tale also known as *Nārada-jātaka*; see Jā 544 at Jā VI 255,⁹. Ānanda is identified with Rucā, the king’s daughter in this tale. Appleton 2014: 14–15 suggests the possibility that this identification betrays a mockery of Ānanda in his pro-women sympathy; on fault-finding tendencies with respect to the figure of Ānanda apparent in the records of the First Saṅgīti see Anālayo 2016a: 172–174.

⁸⁷ Anālayo 2014a: 116, who adds that it would have been “demeritorious to change from male to female when this happens in a society where females find themselves in a disadvantageous position because of their sex”.

⁸⁸ Filippi 1996: 132 note 9 remarks that “[a]ccording to Indian beliefs, death – which in the large majority of cases conditions one’s rebirth in another species – does not facilitate sex changes. Usually a soul is reborn maintaining the same gender”. Doniger 2000: 298 notes that the general dearth of gender transformations in Hindu stories of rebirth stands “in strong contrast to the frequent changes of species that take place in reincarnation in texts like *The Laws of Manu*”. On the consistency in sex across lives in the *Apadāna* collection see Appleton 2011: 43–44 and 2014: 62 and Anālayo 2015: 103, and in Theravāda *Khuddaka-nikāya* texts in general Appleton 2012: 170–171.

⁸⁹ It is possible that maleness was not always considered, or not universally considered, a requisite of a predicted bodhisattva whereby a change of sex into male would be mandatory; see Dhammadiṇṇā 2015: 484–485 and 520–522.

stories allows for the interpretation that sex-change, when it happens, is a dramatic event, and, therefore, that female birth is dramatically worse than male birth”, with far-reaching consequences in later Buddhist gender soteriology.

In connection to this, Anālayo (2017a: 129–131) has pointed to the result of the requirements of narrative consistency and cohesion when tales from the ancient Indian narrative repertoire were incorporated in the multi-life biography of the Bodhisattva.⁹⁰ The journeys through a very large number and diversity of births that exhibit all kinds of variations, comprising even episodes involving animal existences, would be strung together as a single path by sex consistency. This would supply a token of continuity, a narrative stabiliser. In particular, Anālayo suggests that when incorporating various tales with male protagonists from the ancient Indian narrative repertoire, the maleness of the protagonists of these stories would have naturally served as a stable characteristic. In the process of identifying one of the protagonists of the various tales as a former existence of the Buddha, a male figure would be the most obvious candidate. This then becomes a normative script for future generations of aspirant bodhisattvas who strive for Buddhahood as well as for the hagiography of the deeds of past Buddhas due to the tendency of texts to apply events in the life of the present Buddha to all previous Buddhas in the lineage.

As a rule, Wangchuk (2007: 101) explains, “the generation of initial resolve is no guarantee of a successful *bodhisattva* career. There is always the chance that a *bodhisattva* will suffer a relapse. Thus depending on the *bodhisattva*’s faculties (*indriya*), the irreversibility is said to be as follows: a *bodhisattva* of the first calibre is irreversible from the moment the initial resolution is made; a *bodhisattva* of medium calibre, from the path of seeing (*darśanamārga*) onwards, and a *bodhisattva* of lesser calibre only from the eighth stage (*bhūmi*) onwards”.⁹¹ Naturally the Bodhisattva would rank as of the first calibre, thus coursing irreversibly from the moment he made his initial resolution to become a Buddha.⁹² From the perspective of Śamathadeva (and his source) the Bodhisattva’s change to female, after having made his resolve to Buddhahood, does not pose any Buddhological problem, nor does it hamper the unfolding of his bodhisattva career. The change of sex and the following cycle of female births is regarded as acceptable, with no indication of a major ‘relapse’ of the Bodhisattva on his path – other than having committed an unwholesome and censurable action that is eventually remedied.

The tradition of the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā* adumbrates the first phase in the Mūla-sarvāstivāda depiction of the epochal career of the Bodhisattva that begins with the first *cittotpāda* as he encounters the former Buddha Śākyamuni and ends with his last birth as a female in the lifetime of the Buddha Ratnaśikhin. Some versions of the stories that detail such an important occasion, such as the *avadāna* in question, negotiate the requirement of maleness by introducing a change of sex back to male at this very juncture, upon receiving the formal prediction to Buddhahood, whereas others postpone it to the immediately successive birth.

The Bodhisattva’s femaleness in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā* (and elsewhere), assumed at the time of the former Buddha Ajita after the initial resolution to Buddhahood is made, and left behind at the time of the former Buddha Ratnaśikhin, seems to be presented

⁹⁰. See also Anālayo 2015: 96–100.

⁹¹. On the other hand, females who made aspirations to be chief disciples etc. saw no need to aspire to maleness also, as noted by Ānandajoti 2015: 7: “none of the women involved aspire to become men, as it was not seen as necessary – or even useful – to change gender while aspiring to ... positions of great rank”.

⁹². This is indicated by Dharmamitra; see Wangchuk 2007: 102 with note 59.

somewhat fluidly and neutrally once it is read against the Buddhological map that it presupposes.

Here it would appear that being born as or changing to female – while a Bodhisattva is in mid-career – is possible. But elsewhere – in other Middle-Period narratives transmitted across different traditions, and in the mainstream fully-fledged bodhisattva literature of the Mahāyāna – this is not thought of as possible. The Pali narrative tradition, for example, does not record any sexual transformation of the Bodhisatta, and the Pali commentarial tradition represented by the commentary to the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* and the commentary to the *Apadāna* does not allow sex change in its enumeration of eighteen different states of existence in which bodhisattvas who have received the final prediction are not to be reborn.⁹³ Interestingly, in this context no mention is explicitly made of female birth as such, although the *Apadāna* commentary lists the non-obtaining of female birth among the gains of bodhisattvahood elsewhere, in a passage glossing the gain of the male sexual characteristic (*liṅgasampatti*). The passage expands on a stanza found in the *Buddhavaṃsa* and it appears, identical in wording, in several other Pali commentaries.⁹⁴ Besides, the impossibility of obtaining the state of existence “of one whose sex changes” (*nāssa liṅgaṃ parivattati*) does not seem to necessarily refer to change from male to female, which is not directly suggested by the other items that are enumerated. At least theoretically, this leaves the possibility open that this list does not concern itself with female birth at all.

According to a position recorded in non-canonical Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma works, it is not possible for a male who has attained the noble path (*āryamārga*) to be reborn as a female. Now the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* states that the four stages of penetrating insight (*nirvedha-bhāgīyas*) can be attained by both women and men.⁹⁵ The fourth is a single moment of insight and the highest state possible for an ordinary worldling that marks the last stage in the preparatory path (*prayogamārga*) of both *śrāvakas* and *bodhisattvas* and is immediately followed by a direct vision of the four noble truths in sixteen aspects, which corresponds to the path of seeing (*darśanamārga*). Although according to the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* this stage of insight is attainable both as a woman or a man, from that point onward a male practitioner will no longer be reborn as a female.⁹⁶

The *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā* explicitly states that, once the *darśanamārga* has been attained, one cannot be reborn as a woman: “the female condition does not manifest again for one who has seen the [four noble] truths”.⁹⁷ The **Mahāvibhāṣā* explains that the development

⁹³. Pj (I) I 49,^{33–50,5} and Ap-a 141,^{15–19}: *evam samiddhābhinihāro ca bodhisatto imāni aṭṭhārasa abhabbaṭṭhānāni na upeti ... nāssa liṅgaṃ parivattati*.

⁹⁴. Ap-a 49,^{2–11}: *āgacchanto ca ye te katābhinihārānaṃ bodhisattānaṃ ānisaṃsā saṃvaṇṇitā ... itthibhāvaṃ na gacchanti*; cf., e.g., B° (CS) 71 [E° not given], Bv-a 271,^{13–22}. The *Dīgha-nikāya* sub-commentary in turn links these benefits to the listing of the eighteen forms of existence into which a bodhisattva will not be born, thus seemingly instituting a correlation between the two listings, see Sv-pt I 129,^{23–30}: *ko ānisaṃso ti? ye te katābhinihārānaṃ bodhisattānaṃ ... aṭṭhārasa abhabbaṭṭhānānupagamanappakārā ānisaṃsā saṃvaṇṇitā*. For a traditional Theravāda perspective on these lists see Mingun Sayādaw 1992: I.2 126–129.

⁹⁵. The heat or glow of wisdom, the summit, the acceptance and the highest worldly state, *ūṣmagata*, *mūrdhan*, *kṣānti* and *laukika*- or *agradharma* respectively.

⁹⁶. *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* on *Abhidharmakośa* VI.21a–b (underlined), Pradhan 1967: 346,¹⁶–347,²: *sarvāṇy api tv etāni catvāri kāmāśrayāṇi. trīṇi manuṣyeṣv evotpadyante triṣu dvīpeṣu. utpāditapūrvāṇāṃ tu deveṣu saṃmukhībhāvah. caturthaṃ deveṣv api. trīṇi strīpuruṣa ubhayāśrayāṇi labhante. agradharmān dvayāśrayān labhate ṅganā. agradharmāṃ tu strī eva dvayāśrayān labhate. puruṣaḥ puruṣāśrayān eva strītvasyāpratisaṃkhyānirodhalābhāt*; Chinese in T 1559 at XXIX 272b_{3–9} and T 1558 at T XXIX 120b_{4–9} (translated in de La Vallée Poussin 1980 [1924]: IV 170–171); Tibetan in D 4090, *mngon pa, khu*, 14b_{4–6} and P 5591, *mngon pa'i bstan bcos, nyu*, 17a_{4–6}. On the specifications made for a female practitioner see footnote 97 below.

⁹⁷. Wogihara 1971: 358,^{20–23}: *yo hy agradharmān utpādayati so 'vaśyam anantaṃ darśanamārgam utpāda-*

that ensues after the fourth *nirvedhabhāgīya* requires being born with a male body, because the female body is inferior.⁹⁸ Elsewhere the **Mahāvibhāṣā* clarifies that the noble path cannot be developed in dependence on the inferior female body.⁹⁹ Thus a male *śrāvaka* who has entered the *darśanamārga* will no longer take a female rebirth by dint of having attained the fourth *nirvedhabhāgīya*. This parallels the condition of a bodhisattva who, with the achievement of the first *bhūmi*, leaves behind the possibility of further rebirths as a woman.¹⁰⁰

The proposal that with the attainment of the first level of awakening female birth is left behind is alien to early Buddhist soteriology; it is in fact not listed among the states of existence that become impossible upon attaining the first level of awakening.¹⁰¹ Thus this tenet appears to be the result of a specific scholastic development in the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma traditions, which departs from the earlier idea of the irrelevance of gender to the spiritual progress of a noble disciple.

What to make of such a perception from the viewpoint of karmic relationships and gender? In general, a position common across the Indian Abhidharma traditions views the female body as relatively inferior compared to the male body.¹⁰² This does not imply, however, that all female bodies are the fruition of inferior karma when compared with all male bodies. A female body is (overall) seen as the result of comparatively minor bad karma or else comparatively inferior-grade good karma (given that human birth is of course the result of very good karma in general). Such an assessment of femaleness versus maleness

yen na ca dr̥ṣṭasatyasya punaḥ strītvaprādurbhāva iti siddhāntaḥ. The passage in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* has already been noted by Harvey 2000: 371, who states that “the Sarvāstivāda school taught that a woman who attained the ‘path of seeing’, i.e., stream-entry, would no longer be reborn as a female (AKB. [*Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*] iv.21a–b)” (the reference to the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* is a misprint, “iv.21a–b” should read “vi.21a–b”). Although the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* text is not fully explicit, Harvey’s suggestion is in line with the understanding of the *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā*. In the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, only a man who has attained the path of seeing (while being a man) is seen as not subject to female birth, but both bodies, *āśraya*, are possible for a woman who has attained the *agradharma* and thereby the path of seeing (while being a woman), *agradharmās tu strī eva dvacyāśrayān labhate*. That is, a woman who attains the path of seeing may be reborn as a man or a woman; a man who attains the path of seeing may be reborn only as a man.

^{98.} T 1545 at T XXVII 33c₁₇–34a₅; cf. also T 1821 at T XLI 348a₁₅_{ult} and T 1822 at T XLI 738a₁₈.

^{99.} T 1545 at T XXVII 130c_{7–11}: 復次聖道亦依男身亦依女身。此中依女身聖道與依女身聖道為因。亦與依男身聖道為因。依男身聖道唯與依男身聖道為因。非依女身聖道以彼劣故; cf. also T 1545 at T XXVII 130c_{12–13}: 男女二身勝劣定故。For other examples of similar negative gendered-soteriology see also Dhammānā 2016a: 47 note 32.

^{100.} See, for example, the indication in the *Mahāvastu* of the Mahāsāṅghika-Lokottaravāda tradition according to which those who are in all the *bhūmis* (leading to Buddhahood) are males, see Senart 1882: I 103,11: *sarvāsu daśabhūmiṣu puruṣā bhavanti*. On the final *nirvedhabhāgīya* in the practice of Mahāyāna Yogācāra see, e.g., Funayama 2011.

^{101.} A noble disciple has done away with the animal realm, the domain of ghosts, the plane of misery, the bad destinations and the place of ruin, e.g., SN 55.29 at SN V 389,16–22 with its parallel SĀ 845 at T II 215c_{25–29}. In the case of the Theravāda tradition, where we are in the fortunate position of being able to access a fairly complete assembly of texts ranging from the four *Nikāyas* to later exegesis, the idea that a female cannot be reborn female after the first level of awakening has been attained would conflict with the evidence of a number of commentarial tales: the once-returner Uttarā Nandamātā (Vv-a 69,31) and the female stream-entrants Rohiṇī (Anuruddha’s sister) (Dhp-a III 298,13_{ult}), who are reborn in Tāvātimsa; the stream-entrant Sunandā (the garland-maker’s daughter), who is reborn as a female attendant to Sakka (Vv-a 170,7–9); the female stream-entrant Sirimā (sister of Jīvaka), reborn in Nimmānaratī (Vv-a 79,25_{ult}); the female stream-entrant Visākha Migaramātā, reborn in Nimmānaratī as the wife of the *deva* king Sunimmita (Vv-a 192,3–7); the female once-returner Sumanā (the youngest daughter of Anāthapiṇḍika), reborn in Tusita (Dhp-a I 153,4–5). In these examples it is clear that the subsequent rebirth involves being a woman. In fact, as far as I know, there does not seem to be any explicit discussion in the Theravāda Abhidharma on the issue of female stream-entrants being reborn as women.

^{102.} As in the *Atthasālinī* passage referenced in note 85 above. On maleness and femaleness in the Sarvāstivāda and Theravāda Abhidharma traditions see Gethin in preparation.

involves a relative component (femaleness is inferior relatively speaking). To inhabit a female body is arguably, at least on average, an unfortunate and lower condition in early and medieval India, which accounts for considering it, generally speaking, less desirable. Thus, from a socio-cultural perspective, a stream-entrant (or a once-returner) born as a female would stand comparatively higher chances of being subject to a state of external deprivation and other difficulties.

In conclusion, returning to the Bodhisattva's femaleness in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-tīkā* (and elsewhere), assumed at the time of the former Buddha Ajita after the initial resolution to Buddhahood is made (to be left behind at the time of the former Buddha Ratnaśikhin), here it appears that being born as or changing to female for a Bodhisattva in mid-career is possible. But elsewhere – in other Middle-Period narratives transmitted across different traditions and in the mainstream fully-fledged bodhisattva literature of the Mahāyāna – this is not envisaged as being possible.

The Bodhisattva's femaleness in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-tīkā* and related sources seems to be presented somewhat fluidly and neutrally once it is read against the Buddhological map that it presupposes. It is no more and no less than one of the well signposted steps in the epochal career that unfolds of its own accord, something of an incidental state of existence as the path proceeds closer to the prediction to Buddhahood and, finally, the present Buddha Śākyamuni's final birth.

Appendix: Text of Up 4069

References: C, *mngon pa, ju* 232b₂–233a₅; D 4094, *mngon pa, ju* 232b₃–233a₅; G 3598, *mzod 'grel, tu* 348a₁–349a₁; N, *mngon pa, tu* 256b₂–257a₆; P 5595, *mngon pa'i bstan bcos, tu* 265b₃–266b₁; Si-T 3323, *mngon pa, ju* 567₁₁–569₂ (with apparatus in vol. 161 p. 737).

The scribal peculiarities of the Golden manuscript Tanjur (e.g., *nyamasu* for *nyams su*, *zhabasu* for *zhabs su* etc.) are not indicated.

ji ltar dge slong gi dge 'dun la bud med ces 'brjod pa zhesⁱ bya ba la | gang gi tshe bcom ldan 'das kyi gsung 'kau sām bīⁱ pa'i 'dgeⁱⁱ slong rnams 'kyisⁱⁱⁱ lan gsum gyi bar du phyir 'bzlog^{iv} pa dang | de'i tshe dge slong rnams kyis the tshom thams cad gcod par mdzad pa sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das la zhus pa | de bzhin gshegs pas phrin las ci zhig mdzad nas las de'i rnam par smin 'pas^v bcom ldan 'das kyis dge ba'i gsung | phan pa'i gsung | gzung bar 'os^{vi} pa'i tshig dag kyang kau sām bī pa'i dge slong rnams kyis lan gsum gyi bar du phyir bzlog | bcom ldan 'das kyis bka' stsal 'pa^{vii} | dge slong dag de bzhin gshegs pa nyid kyis te | sngon gzhan gyis byas shing bsags pa dag gzhan 'su^{viii} zhig gis nyams su myong 'bar^{ix} 'gyur 'ba^x zhes bya ba nas | lus can rnams la 'bras bur smin '||^{xi} zhes bya ba'i bar du'o || dge slong dag sngon byung ba 'das pa'i dus na de bzhin gshegs pa dgra bcom pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas rig pa dang zhabs su ldan pa | bde bar gshegs pa '||^{xii} 'jig rten mkhyen pa '||^{xiii} bla na med pa '||^{xiv} skyes bu 'dul zhing kha lo sgyur ba | lha dang mi rnams kyi ston pa sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas 'ma^{xv} pham pa zhes bya ba 'jig rten du byung ste | de'i tshe na nga byang chub sems dpa'i 'spyad pa^{xvi} spyod de phyug po'i bur gyur te | bla na med pa'i byang chub tu sems bskyed cing rab tu byung ngo || rab tu byung nas sde snod gsum par gyur to || de nas dge slong gi dge 'dun la rtsod pa byung 'ste^{xvii} | des rtsod pa de cher 'phel bar byas so || ji tsam na dge slong mdo 'sde^{xviii} 'dzin pa zhig gis de bton nas rtsod pa de zhi bar byas pa dang | 'des bud^{xix} med rnams kyi rtsod pa zhi bar byas sam zhes dge slong gi dge 'dun la bud med ces 'smras so^{xx} || ngag gi nyes par 'spyad^{xxi} pa des de'i skyes pa'i dbang po nub cing bud med kyi dbang po byung bar gyur cing skye ba lnga brgyar bud med du skyes shing yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas rin chen gtsug tor can gyis de'i bud med kyi dngos po bzlog cing skyes pa'i dngos po thob par 'byas so^{xxii} || nga nyid de'i tshe de'i dus na phyug po'i bur gyur cing byang chub sems dpa'i spyad pa spyod pa na

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- i. G omits: brjod pa zhes. CDNP add: brjod pa zhes.
 - ii. C reads: dgi. G reads: dge'.
 - iii. G reads: kyi.
 - iv. CD read: bzlog. GNP read: zlog.
 - v. G reads: pa.
 - vi. G reads: 'ongs.
 - vii. P reads: ba.
 - viii. G reads: sum.
 - ix. P reads: par.
 - x. P reads: pa.
 - xi. GNP omit: ||. CD read: |.
 - xii. G omits: |.
 - xiii. GNP omit: |.
 - xiv. GNP omit: |.
 - xv. G omits: ma.
 - xvi. C reads: spyod pa.
 - xvii. D reads: sta.
 - xviii. CDGP read: sde. N reads: de.
 - xix. D reads: nges bung.
 - xx. D reads: smras se.
 - xxi. C reads: spyod.
 - xxii. G reads: byaso.

sde snod ^{[j]xxiii} gsum par gyur kyang ngas dge 'dun la ngag ^{[gi]xxiv} nyes par spyod pa ^{[smras]xxv} pas las
 de'i rgyus kau ^{[śām bi]xxvi} pa'i dge slong rnams kyis lan gsum gyi bar du ^{[nga'i]xxvii} tshig phyir bzlog go
 | 'di nyid phran tshags las sangs rgyas mang po'i rtogs pa brjod par ^{[tshigs]xxviii} ^{[j]xxix} su bcad par byas te |
 de nas sangs rgyas mi pham pa'i || sngon byung sde snod gsum par gyur ^{[j]xxx} dge slong dge 'dun rtsod
 pa na ^{[j]xxxi} dge 'dun ^{[bud]xxxii} med ces brjod pa'i || ^{[ngag]xxxiii} gi nyes par spyad byas pas || bud med nyid
 du nye bar song || slar yang sems rab ^{[dad]xxxiv} pa yis || skyes pa'i dngos po nyid du gyur ^{[j]xxxv} zhes
 gsungs so ^{[j]xxxvi}

xxiii. G adds: gnad.

xxiv. CD read: gi. GNP read: gis.

xxv. C reads: smros.

xxvi. G reads: śām bi.

xxvii. G omits: nga'i.

xxviii. G reads: tshags.

xxix. G adds: las sangs rgyas mang pa'i rtags ba brjad par tshig.

xxx. G reads: |.

xxxi. N reads: |.

xxxii. G reads: bung.

xxxiii. G reads: dag.

xxxiv. GP read: dang.

xxxv. GNP omit: ||. C reads: |.

xxxvi. N reads: |.

Abbreviations

Ap-a	<i>Apadāna-aṭṭhakathā</i>
As	<i>Atthasālinī</i>
B ^e	Burmese edition (Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana Tripiṭaka 4.0, Vipassana Research Institute)
Bv-a	<i>Buddhavaṃsa-aṭṭhakathā</i>
C	Cone edition
CBETA	Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association
CS	Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana Tripiṭaka 4.0, Vipassana Research Institute
D	Derge edition (Tōhoku)
Dhp	<i>Dhammapada</i>
Dhp-a	<i>Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā</i>
EĀ	<i>Ekottarika-āgama</i> (T 125)
E ^e	European edition (Pali Text Society)
G	Golden Tanjur edition
Jā	<i>Jātaka-atthavaṇṇanā</i> or <i>Jātaka-aṭṭhakathā</i>
MĀ	<i>Madhyama-āgama</i> (T 26)
MN	<i>Majjhima-nikāya</i>
N	Narthaṅg edition
P	Peking edition (Ōtani)
Pj	<i>Paramatthajotikā</i> (I) (<i>Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā</i>)
SĀ	<i>Samyukta-āgama</i> (T 99)
Si-T	dPe bsdur ma (‘Sichuan’) Tanjur edition
SN	<i>Samyutta-nikāya</i>
Sp	<i>Samantapāsādikā</i>
Sv-pt	<i>Sumaṅgalavilāsinī-purāṇaṭṭikā</i> (<i>Dīghanikāyāṭṭhakathā-ṭṭikā</i>)
T	Taishō edition (CBETA, 2014)
ult	ulterior, following
Up	<i>Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭṭikā</i> (<i>Upāyikā</i>)
Vv-a	<i>Vimānavatthu-aṭṭhakathā</i>
Vin	<i>Vinayaṭṭakā</i>
Vism-mṭ	<i>Visuddhimagga-mahāṭṭikā</i> (ed. Marammaratthe Buddhasāsana Society, 2008)

Note

When quoting text editions I have adjusted the sandhi, punctuation, capitalisation etc. and simplified some of the text-critical conventions for the sake of consistency and ease of reference.

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